

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF STUDIES IN

CIVIL WAR HISTORY



VOLUME TWO NUMBER TWO

JUNE 1956

FIVE DOLLARS A YEAR, ONE-FIFTY A COPY

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Civil War History

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY THE
STATE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

CLYDE C. WALTON, *Editor*
University Libraries

VOL. II

June, 1956

NO. II

Subscriptions & Manuscripts

CIVIL WAR HISTORY is published quarterly by the State University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa. Editor: Clyde C. Walton, Jr.; Assistant: Sandra Betz Handford; Art Work: Wayne Hampton. Copyright 1956 by the State University of Iowa. Second class mail privileges authorized at Iowa City, Iowa.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES in the United States and Canada are \$5.00 per year, or \$4.00 per member when Civil War Round Tables or Lincoln Groups subscribe for their memberships. Subscriptions to countries in the Pan-American postal union are \$5.40 per year, and to other foreign countries \$5.75. Single copies of the magazine are available at \$1.50 from The Abraham Lincoln Book Shop, 18 East Chestnut Street, Chicago 11, Illinois.

MANUSCRIPTS of a general nature should be sent to the Editor. Notes and Queries, material for *The Continuing War* and *For Collectors Only*, book reviews or books for consideration should be sent to the editors concerned, at the addresses listed in department headings.

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Lincoln's Difficult Decisions *

BRUCE CATTON

TO STAND IN NEW SALEM and talk about the great decisions which Abraham Lincoln made, which have affected the life of the entire country ever since, is to run into one of the strange and dramatic chapters of the American story.

One hundred and twenty-five years ago Lincoln came to this town as a young man of twenty-two. He was long, lanky, uneducated, uncultivated and uninspired. There was nothing whatever to show that this uncouth frontiersman had the American future in his keeping. To all outward appearances he was simply one more back woodsman coming to a little town to make his way in the world.

But American life works in strange ways, and one of the inspiring things about the Lincoln story is the simple fact that it was to be given to this untaught countryman to grow and develop and finally to lead a great nation down the path to the future. What Lincoln did, when he got into the White House, grew directly out of what he was here in New Salem. Through him, middle America spoke, with all the vision and the overpowering strength which had been developed on the frontier in the formative days of the republic.

As President, Lincoln had some tremendous decisions to make. He had nothing to guide him as he made them except his own sense of what America was all about and his own willingness to meet a crisis according to the best light which his own conscience could give him.

The first decision was thrust upon him within six weeks of the day when he took the oath of office. In the shadowy marshland around Fort

* This address was delivered at a special convocation of Lincoln College, celebrating the 125th anniversary of Lincoln's arrival at New Salem. This special Lincoln College 125th anniversary convocation was held in Petersburg, Illinois, April 22, 1956.

Sumter southern guns opened fire, and it was up to Lincoln to determine what this challenge meant and how it should be coped with. In his reaction to this sudden stroke of violence Lincoln went far to determine the scope and the meaning of the war which the bombardment brought on.

Without hesitation, Lincoln accepted the war as a revolutionary situation. None of the guide lines laid down by the founding fathers were of any use to him here. He had to decide for himself what the war meant and how it should be fought. Accepting it as a revolution, he unhesitatingly adopted revolutionary means to fight it—and by so doing, he set the key for everything that was to happen in the next four years. He concluded, above everything else, that he would not be bound by legalistic considerations. Secession as he saw it was nothing less than an attempt at revolution, and in a revolution any means that lie to one's hands must be used and used quickly.

On April 19, the Sixth Massachusetts Infantry undertook to march across Baltimore on its way to Washington and got into a street fight with a secessionist mob. Lincoln's reaction was swift and ruthless. The Mayor of Baltimore and nineteen members of the state legislature were promptly thrown in jail. When the chief justice of the United States Supreme Court issued a writ of habeas corpus, Lincoln blandly ignored it. He marched troops into Baltimore, entrusting their command to the hard-boiled General Ben Butler; he put Federal troops in eastern Maryland to curb secessionist sentiment there. He made it, as a matter of fact, quite impossible for southern sympathizers in Maryland to exert any influence on the way Maryland would react to the crisis of civil war.

Doing all this, Lincoln stretched the Constitution past the breaking point and without question acted in an extremely highhanded manner. What Maryland might have done in regard to secession, if left to itself, meant nothing. It was held in the Union and the danger that the national capital would be isolated by armed secessionists was averted. Using revolutionary tactics, Lincoln checked the spread of the revolution in the most crucial area of all. He did it, without any particular sanction of the law, before the war was two months old.

The same story is repeated in Missouri. Here was another of the crucial border states whose action would be all-important to the attempt to preserve the Union. Lincoln equipped two men with extraordinary and completely irregular authority—Francis P. Blair, Jr., a private citizen who was given authority to depose a United States army commander if he saw fit, and Captain Nathaniel Lyon, a fire-eating young army officer who was authorized to raise troops in a completely irregular way and to use them against the citizens of Missouri if in his judgment the situation required such action.

It is worth noting that old General Winfield Scott, transmitting Lincoln's orders to Captain Lyon, scribbled across the bottom of the order, this sentence: "It is revolutionary times and therefore I do not object to the irregularity of this." Old General Scott saw what was going on. The United States had not merely entered into a war. It was coping with a revolution, all of the old rules were off, and the important thing was to strike the revolution down with any weapon that was handy.

It is also worth noting that the first bloodshed in the Civil War occurred in Baltimore and in St. Louis and came when United States troops clashed with armed civilians. Formal battles would come later; these street fights in Maryland and in Missouri demonstrated clearly that what was going on was a *civil war* in the literal sense of the words, and that the government would have no hesitation in fighting the war in that manner.

From this early decision, made on the spur of the moment with no precedent as a guide, immeasurable consequences flowed. For Lincoln's instinctive reaction to the challenge of secession simply meant that the war which had been begun by the bombardment of Fort Sumter would in fact be a war to the finish. Compromise was made impossible. The South could succeed in what it had set out to do only by destroying the government of the United States.

The reaction to this, among the plain people of the North, was overwhelming. The leaders of the South made many miscalculations during the war, but none of them was more fatal than the failure to realize that the concept of nationality had deep roots all across the North. The people of the North were certainly of two minds about slavery itself, and about the place which the colored man must eventually occupy in American life. They were not in the least certain regarding the abstract question of the right of secession itself. But when the struggle was presented to them in its essentials, as an attempt to destroy the national government and to splinter the American nation into separate fragments, they rallied behind President Lincoln almost unanimously. Before the war was three months old, Lincoln had enlisted the immense power of pride in American citizenship behind his effort to preserve the Union. He had given the people of the North a moral issue to respond to: was the concept of the inherent unity of free men in a free society worth fighting for? Overwhelmingly, the Northern people agreed that it was. With their agreement Lincoln marshalled a force which would ultimately be greater than any force which the leaders of the Confederacy could bring against him.

Over and over again, Lincoln insisted that he had gone with the tide. Repeatedly, he said, in effect: I have not controlled events, but events rather have controlled me. Here was another great decision which he made very early in the struggle—the decision not to apply a doctrinaire

judgment to the crisis at hand, but to follow a force which welled up from the mainsprings of American life. He had no hard and fast program, except that he was deeply determined to preserve the Union. The great decisions which he made during the war flowed out of that determination and nothing else.

For example, quite early in the game, it was necessary for Lincoln to insist that under the American form of government, in time of war, policy is laid down by the President and not by any general of the army, no matter how distinguished or important that general may be. In the fall of 1861 General John Charles Fremont took it upon himself to proclaim the emancipation of slaves in Missouri. Fremont considered that his chief support in Missouri came from anti-slavery people. It seemed to him that he could not carry on his fight to save Missouri for the Union without enlisting that anti-slavery sentiment solidly behind the United States flag. But Fremont's proclamation, coming at that particular moment, bade fair to do much more harm than good. The war could not be won unless men sympathetic to slavery could be induced to support the effort to strike down secession. Lincoln saw this where Fremont could not see it, and at substantial risk to his own political fortunes he over-ruled the brash general and cancelled the premature order for emancipation. A little later, the disgruntled Fremont disappeared from the roster of Union generals.

In the following winter, Lincoln took the same action in respect to Major General David Hunter, who commanded Federal occupation troops along the Carolina coast. Like Fremont, Hunter had seen the entire war in terms of his own immediate problem. It seemed to him necessary, if his army of occupation was to be successful, to turn the war into an Abolitionist crusade, and he issued an *Edict of Emancipation* not unlike Fremont's. Again, Lincoln quickly intervened and reversed a General. He himself, as the civilian head of the government, would lay down the policy that would govern the war. He would not let any general determine that policy on his own hook.

Early in the summer of 1862, Lincoln ran into the same problem for a third time—this time with a reverse twist. After the *Seven Days* campaign in front of Richmond, General George B. McClellan, the idolized commander of the Army of the Potomac, undertook to read Lincoln a lesson about the high policy of the war. Where Fremont and Hunter had been staunch abolitionists, McClellan was just the reverse. He told Lincoln bluntly that the men in his army would not fight if the war became a war to end slavery. In effect, he warned Lincoln that the government must on no account give way to Abolitionist sentiment in its prosecution of the war.

Once again, Lincoln stoutly asserted the presidential prerogative. It

was up to the generals to fight the war; it was up to the President and the Congress to say what the war was being fought for. McClellan had hardly finished giving Lincoln the benefit of his views about this matter of policy before Lincoln was drafting the Emancipation Proclamation.

In presenting this great state paper, Lincoln once again was following the main current of events rather than trying to control them. He was doing, in the fall of 1862, what he had rebuked Fremont and Hunter for trying to do a few months earlier; and he was doing it because, obviously, in his judgment, the time now was ripe for such a move whereas it had not been ripe a few months earlier.

For the war itself had been writing its own verdict on the question of chattel slavery. The Union troops who invaded the South were not, by and large, abolitionist in sentiment. Most of the soldiers had no animus whatever against slavery when the war started, and the people of the North had very little more sympathy for the free Negro than the people of the South had. But as the troops got into Southern territory, they began to change in spite of themselves. They found, for one thing, that the colored slaves in such states as Tennessee and Virginia were somehow on their side. As members of an invading army, entering a land where every man's hand was against them, these soldiers found that the colored folk were their friends.

They found also that it was all but impossible to wage a war against a society based on the institution of slavery without sooner or later doing something about the institution itself. They had learned, for instance, that the economics of this war were important—that the destruction of the Southern war potential could be quite as important as the destruction of Southern armies in the field. The principal item in the Southern war potential was clearly the institution of slavery. It did not take Union soldiers very long to realize that to strike a blow at slavery was to strike a blow at the chief underpinning of the whole Confederate nation. The soldiers became practical Abolitionists, even though they had no use for the abstract arguments of men like William Lloyd Garrison and Henry Ward Beecher. They struck at slavery simply because they came to see that they would have to strike at it in order to defeat the Southern confederacy.

Lincoln's action in respect to the Emancipation Proclamation had precisely the same roots. Over and over, Lincoln insisted that whatever he did about slavery he did as a means of winning the war. The resolution passed by the United States Congress shortly after the first Battle of Bull Run, stating that "the war is not being fought to disturb the established institutions of the states," had his complete agreement. Nevertheless, by the fall of 1862 Lincoln had come to his greatest decision—the decision to

broaden the base of the entire conflict and to make the war for a re-established Union a war also for human freedom.

Regarding his own personal feeling about slavery there is no room for doubt. Repeatedly, he made it clear that he considered slavery an immense moral wrong, and that as an individual he was utterly opposed to it. Until the time seemed ripe to him, however, he had refused to let his own personal convictions on the matter affect the policy on which he would fight the war. He was driven to the change finally in exactly the same way that his soldiers were driven to it—as a matter of military necessity. He had written to a correspondent saying “I never had a wish to touch the foundations of Southern society.” To another correspondent, however, he wrote as follows: “It may as well be understood, once and for all, that I shall not surrender the game leaving any available card unplayed.” And so at length he played the card of the Emancipation Proclamation, and it turned out to be his ace of trumps.

Here, without question, was the most difficult of all of Lincoln's war-time decisions. Making it, Lincoln risked what he dare not lose—the support of the Northern Democrats, without which the war could not be won—in order to gain what he had to have: a broader base on which the war effort could be carried forward to final victory. He made the break with the American past complete. From the moment he signed this document, it was certain that an incalculable new era would begin in American life. For a President whose great genius was to provide leadership without ever getting too far in advance of the march of majority opinion, here was an exceedingly risky stroke. His sense of timing had to be perfect; if it was not—if it should turn out that he was proclaiming emancipation before the time for it was ripe—the action could easily turn out to be a disastrous blunder.

As events proved, Lincoln's sense of timing was accurate. His bold decision was supported—by the armies, and by the people back home. And the proclamation itself became one of the most momentous acts ever done by an American President, affecting the lives of all future generations of Americans. It had an immediate practical value which went far to settle the final outcome of the war; in addition, it contained an element which is still at work in this country today.

To begin with, it permanently isolated the Southern Confederacy. Once the Federal Government was committed to a war to end slavery, all chance of European intervention, either active or passive, on the side of the Confederacy was ended. The Confederate nation was locked in with the dreadful anachronism which was its fatal burden. It could not escape from it. The chance that the war might end in some sort of compromise was gone forever. From this moment on, the Confederacy was doomed.

Yet the importance of this paper went far beyond that.

Bear in mind that underneath the entire argument over slavery there was nothing more or less than a race problem. It was a problem which men in the 1860's considered all but insoluble. Lincoln himself had moments in which he felt that way about it. His repeated efforts to promote some sort of colonization scheme which would remove the colored race bodily from the United States and transplant it to some far off land is striking testimony to that effect. He was hardly any more able than the Confederate leaders themselves to understand how the white and black races could co-exist in one country on terms of equality, and there is ample evidence to show that he feared the consequences of social equality between the races quite as much as any Southerner feared them.

Nevertheless, when the time seemed ripe to him Lincoln struck to destroy slavery, despite his doubts about the future relationship between the races, and by so doing he committed America forever to the loftiest ideal any nation has ever tried to follow—an ideal which even now is far from attainment and which in fact is today under severe attack, but which the American people can never stop trying to reach.

For what flowed out of the decision to destroy slavery was nothing less than the compulsion to solve the race problem: the determination that all of the people in the American society must be forever free, with equal rights and equal privileges. Free society and racism are defined as eternal incompatibles. We are committed to the belief that no matter how difficult human prejudice and folly may make the task, there must some day be worked out a way of life in which all peoples will get along with each other without discrimination and without special privilege.

This, of course, does not apply merely to the white and the colored races. It goes all across the board. It asserts that the magnificent concept of the universal brotherhood of man is an attainable ideal, an ideal which the people of America can never abandon.

It is hardly necessary to remark that we have not yet come even moderately close to the realization of this ideal. It may well be that generations will have to pass before we can be even partly satisfied with our progress in that direction. But the 600,000 graves which were filled by the Civil War are significant markers along the road. By the infinite grief and sorrow which the filling of those graves cost, we are committed to an eternal effort to reach this goal. We will have many setbacks along the way. There will be times when the hideous old banner of racial superiority is raised afresh—when men born in America will deny everything America stands for in order to try to preserve a remnant of the old theory that some of us belong to a master race and that some of the rest of us were born to inferiority and oppression. But men who raise this banner are fighting a rear-guard action and they cannot win. The decision was made nearly a century ago, and it can never be reversed.

This, and nothing less than this, is what we get from the mind of the gawky young frontiersman who came ambling into New Salem one hundred and twenty-five years ago with all of life ahead of him. Somehow, from the society that he lived in here, from the very air he breathed as an American, he drew the vision of a human society which some day would go beyond prejudice and selfish interest and try to make a working reality out of the magnificent concept of society in which all human beings are members, one of another. From his American background and from the depths of his heart, Lincoln drew this vision, and the courage to embody it in action, not to speak of the determination that was necessary to put it into effect. For all time to come, as long as the word America means anything at all to struggling men and women, we are wedded to his vision. From the example of his life and his words, may we draw the nobility and the bravery to follow the road that he marked out for us.

TO PRESIDENT LINCOLN

Proudest of all earth's thrones

Is his who rules by a free people's choice;
Who, 'midst fierce party strife and battle groans,
Hears, ever rising in harmonious tones,
A grateful people's voice.

Steadfast in thee we trust,

Tried as no man was ever tried before;
God made thee merciful—God keep thee just
Be true!—and triumph over all thou must.
God bless thee evermore!

GREAT CENTRAL FAIR, June 16, 1864

—*Daily Fare, Philadelphia*

John W. Mies is a native Chicagoan and member of the Chicago Civil War Round Table. He has long been a student of military history and served overseas with the Navy in World War II and the Korean War. At present he is a radio writer at CBS in Chicago.

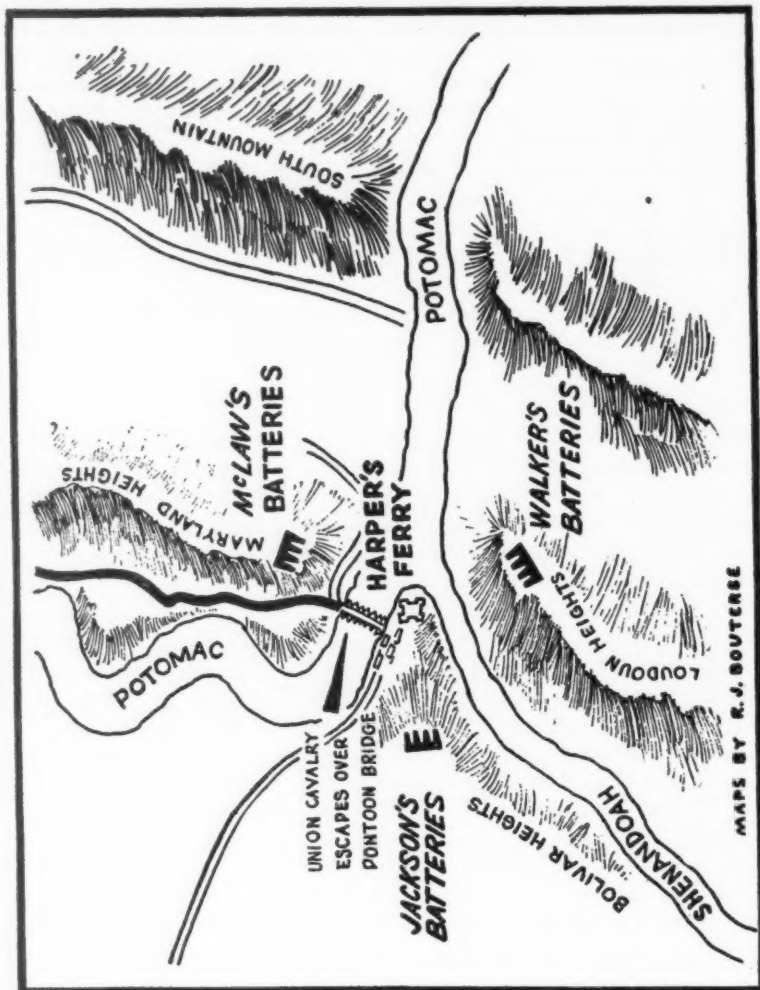
Breakout at Harper's Ferry

JOHN W. MIES

DURING THE EARLY DAYS OF SEPTEMBER, 1862, the Union Cause was anything but bright. As far as the North was concerned this second autumn of the war could well bring final disaster. Politically and militarily they were about used up. In August a new "white hope" had come out from the Western Army. He was Major General John Pope and he went into the Second Bull Run with an impressive string of victories. He came out with his army smashed and his paper reputation gone. Now, Lee was following up with an invasion of Maryland, and England stood waiting in the wings . . . just about ready to give her recognition to the young Confederacy. Washington was a city of nerves and fear . . . in the corridors of government men whispered that the game was lost. A desperate President Lincoln prayed for a victory. Between Robert E. Lee and the Union capital stood the much-abused Army of the Potomac . . . back under the over-cautious hand of Major General George B. McClellan. On September 17th they met on the banks of the Antietam and Lincoln got his victory. Not quite a victory perhaps . . . more like a bloody draw . . . but it was enough. It stopped Lee. But before this climactic slugfest was fought the fate of the Union garrison at Harper's Ferry was to be decided . . .

Harper's Ferry was not much of a place for a soldier to be at anytime, but it was particularly bad in September of 1862. A river crossing, lying so to speak, at the bottom of a teacup, it was a natural military trap. Nevertheless, Halleck insisted on defending it. He fondly called it—"The Gate of Maryland"¹—seemingly unaware that the instant Lee entered the

¹ Samuel B. Pettengill, *The College Cavaliers* (Chicago: H. McAllister & Co., 1883), p. 37.



state by any other "gate" Harper's Ferry protected nothing. Lee wanted it reduced as a Union fortification, because he considered it to be a break in his new line of communications with Richmond.²

The town itself was built on the slope of a hill, rising in triangular shape from the junction of the Shenandoah and Potomac. Bottled up there . . . where old John Brown's dream had ended . . . were some 14,000 Union soldiers, among them about 1,300 cavalry; these cavalry were the 8th New York, 12th Illinois, 7th Squadron, 1st Rhode Island, 6th Squadron, 1st Maryland and a detachment of the Maryland Potomac Home Brigade.³ These Union troopers, led ironically enough, by an Alabama born, Mississippi bred, West Pointer named Benjamin F. Davis, brought off a brilliant cavalry exploit that for sheer audacity was seldom equaled during the war.

The Confederate move against Harper's Ferry was part of Lee's grand strategy for a drive North that he hoped would end the war. It began on September 10th under the command of General T. J. "Stonewall" Jackson.⁴ His long grey columns had swung out of Frederick, Maryland, cocky and confident. Jauntily they pounded up the road with brass and drums blaring out "The Girl I Left Behind Me"⁵ as the dust swirled about their snapping regimental flags. By the 14th of September, McLaws held Maryland Heights, commanding Harper's Ferry from the north. From atop Loudoun Heights on the far side of the Shenandoah, Walker's artillery, five long range parrot guns, were shelling the Union garrison below. Jackson himself blocked retreat to the west from his positions on Bolivar Heights. The Confederate encirclement was complete and Harper's Ferry doomed.⁶

At this point the morale of the cavalry along with the rest of the defenders was pretty low. Not that you could blame them very much. For two days they had been under some heavy shelling from McLaws and Walker. In the morning when Jackson's artillery on Bolivar Heights joined in, things would be really bad.⁷ It was either hold out and be

² *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (New York: The Century Co., 1887-88) volume II, page 605. All references to *Battles and Leaders* in this paper refer to volume II; the work will hereafter be cited as *B. & L.*

³ William M. Luff, "March of the Cavalry from Harper's Ferry, September 14, 1862" in *Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, Illinois Commandry, Papers* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1894), volume II, p. 35.

⁴ *B. & L.*, p. 663.

⁵ Donald B. Sanger and Thomas R. Hay, *James Longstreet* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), pp. 93-4.

⁶ *B. & L.*, p. 609.

⁷ *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, (Washington: 1880-1901) Series 1, volume 19, part I, p. 951. All references in this paper to this work pertain to this volume; the work hereafter will be cited *O.R.*

butchered piecemeal by the batteries on the surrounding hills or an inglorious surrender and a trip to a Confederate prison pen.

With this unpleasant future staring them in the face many thought of escape or of a last ditch attempt to fight their way through the Confederate lines.⁸ Unfortunately, the garrison commander Colonel Dixon S. Miles, was not among those thinking such dangerous thoughts. In fact, he frowned upon them—frowned most severely. A regular army officer of some 40 years service, Miles went strictly by the book. He was one of those military nonentities who crop up now and then in the best of armies. He was not only unimaginative, but judging from his actions at Harper's Ferry lacked even ordinary intelligence.⁹ For example, instead of moving out and making his defense on Maryland Heights, the key to the entire position, he abandoned it to the Confederates on the grounds that his orders were to defend *Harper's Ferry* and he "*must obey his orders literally.*"¹⁰ Naturally enough, his troops were rather bitter about the whole thing. The majority felt as did one young officer who said, "Boys, we've been sold!"¹¹

One man in the garrison who had no idea of surrendering and meant to do something about it was Benjamin F. Davis, Colonel of the 8th New York Cavalry. When war came, Davis was a Captain in the old 1st Cavalry, the only Southern born man in his class at the Point to remain with the Union; his class numbered among its graduates, Jeb Stuart, Pegram and Custis Lee. Davis had learned his soldiering on the Frontier and had been wounded in action against the Apache at Gila Creek in the campaign of '57.¹² He was a man who knew cavalry and how to use it and who possessed a rare talent for whipping a volunteer regiment into Regular Army trim. He had a still rarer talent for making them like it—and him. Davis was a soldier's soldier, tough, daring, resourceful.

Somewhere along the line Davis had acquired the nickname "Grimes" as well as a reputation for being a strict disciplinarian. When he took command of the 8th New York in late June, 1862, the troopers in general, like the rest of the Union Cavalry, were a pretty sorry lot. By August, Grimes had his men equipped, mounted and well disciplined. They were hardly recognizable as the same confused mob who, when used as infantry against Jackson at the Battle of Winchester that past May, had thrown away their muskets and run.¹³

⁸ Luff, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

⁹ O.R., p. 799.

¹⁰ Pettengill, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

¹¹ [Morford, Henry] *Red Tape and Pigeon-Hole Generals* (New York: Carleton, 1864), p. 15.

¹² George W. Cullum, *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the United States Military Academy* (New York: James Miller, 1879), II, p. 385.

¹³ Lewis H. Clark, *Military History of Wayne County, New York* (New York: Clark, Hulett & Gaylord, 1883), pp. 534-36.

In a short space of less than two months, Grimes Davis had managed to instill some of the professional soldier's pride of regiment into the 8th New York. He had cracked down hard on the boys when necessary—in-sulted them, punished them, made them earn his compliments, and most of all made them feel like cavalymen.¹⁴ Now he was ready to test them. So far, the 8th New York, like the other cavalry inside Harper's Ferry, hadn't done much beyond galloping about on routine reconnaissance duty, but Colonel Davis had ideas of changing all that. It was with him that the plan for a breakout was born.¹⁵

Davis figured there must be some other bold spirits in the garrison who would listen to his ideas and he found two of them in Brigadier General Julius White and Lt. Colonel Hasbrouck Davis, (no relation) of the 12th Illinois. General White had come into Harper's Ferry the day before with a small detachment from Martinsburg, Virginia. Although he out-ranked Colonel Miles, he did not assume command of the garrison, acting merely in an advisory capacity.¹⁶ Grimes reasoned, and quite correctly, that as things stood the cavalry were strictly dead weight there. The forage for the horses was just about gone and furthermore he did not want to sit quietly and wait to be given transportation to Libby Prison. He "desired the privilege of cutting his way out."¹⁷ White and Hasbrouck Davis were quick to agree. Jackson was looking forward to getting his hands on the cavalry horses, for the Rebels needed them badly for remounts.¹⁸ The talk then swung over to escape for the entire garrison, but the three officers decided that the infantry and artillery "could not march fast enough to succeed."¹⁹

General White left to arrange a meeting with Colonel Miles at headquarters, a meeting that turned into quite a stormy session. Colonel Miles was not an easy man to get through to and he couldn't see the breakout proposal for dust, loudly proclaiming that it was "wild, impractical and sure to invariably result in serious loss to the government."²⁰ But Grimes Davis was a determined man, a man not in the mood for argument. He wanted out, and out he was going to go! Miles was reminded that if the cavalry stayed where it was it would *certainly* be a loss to the government, but still he remained stubborn. Davis let him have a few well-chosen words and the meeting broke up with Grimes barreling out of

¹⁴ Henry Norton, *Deeds of Daring or History of the 8th New York Volunteer Cavalry* (Norwich, New York: 1888), pp. 24-5.

¹⁵ O.R., pp. 583-84.

¹⁶ B. & L., p. 612.

¹⁷ O.R., pp. 583-84.

¹⁸ Rhode Island Soldiers and Sailors Historical Society. *Personal Narratives of events in the war of the rebellion* (Providence, R.I.: 1878-1915), Series IV, number 2, p. 38. This work hereafter cited *Rhode Island*.

¹⁹ B. & L., p. 613.

²⁰ Pettengill, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

headquarters in rare temper. Calling the boys of the 8th New York to gather 'round, he told them of his plan and added that they were going out—orders or no orders.²¹

General White, being more of a diplomat than Grimes, kept working on Colonel Miles. Finally, and still with some reluctance, Miles gave his consent to the breakout attempt. The order was issued to the various commands concerned and on the afternoon of the 14th the cavalry officers met to discuss escape plans.²² Davis originally had proposed to go up the Western side of the Potomac as far as Kearneysville and then to cross the river at Shepardtown,²³ but after talking to a scout who had been in and out of the Ferry several times in the past few days, Davis changed his mind. A hassle developed with each officer having a different suggestion. One wanted to cross the Shenandoah near its junction with the Potomac and make a run for Washington, but this particular ford was full of deep spots and was written off as too dangerous to attempt.²⁴ Another suggested breaking through Jackson's forces fronting the Ferry under cover of darkness and hiding in the mountains of Martinsburg, Virginia. After some further haggling it was decided to make the attempt by crossing the pontoon bridge over the Potomac, and taking the mountain road to Sharpsburg. This was the "John Brown Road" that went through McClellan's positions on Maryland Heights.²⁵ Since McClellan was supposed to be somewhere near Sharpsburg this route seemed the best for making contact with the main army.

A minor breakout had been successfully pulled off the night before when a Captain Russell of the 1st Maryland volunteered to carry a message from Colonel Miles to General McClellan. With nine picked troopers from his command he managed to snake his way through the Rebel pickets, reaching McClellan about 9:00 A.M. on the 14th with the report that Harper's Ferry could not hold out more than 48 hours.²⁶ If the main body of cavalry could duplicate this distinguished exploit, Grimes Davis would be a happy man.

With the approach of darkness the cavalry was put on the alert. Every trooper was made aware of the risks involved. The moment they started across the pontoon bridge there would be no turning back. If a man preferred to stay and take his risks with Stonewall Jackson's artillery this was the time to speak up. For as Major Corliss of the Rhode Island squadron put it, "by morning we shall all be in Pennsylvania, on the way to

²¹ Norton, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-7.

²² Pettengill, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

²³ O.R., p. 584.

²⁴ Luff, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

²⁵ Pettengill, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

²⁶ O.R., p. 720.

Richmond, or in Hell!"²⁷ A few did stay, but most of the boys were willing to try anything rather than sit and wait for capture.²⁸

Even in the most dangerous situations a soldier always seems to think first about his stomach—or rather the fullness of it—and the cavalry was no exception. Supper was hastily eaten and the little remaining forage passed out to the horses. Every man was supplied with extra rounds of ammunition and then told to ditch all unnecessary equipment.²⁹ Davis knew they would have to travel fast to make it at all. Ditching the equipment must have taken a little time for the Union cavalryman had plenty of it. In fact, about the roughest job he had was swinging in and out of the saddle. One observer commented that "a derrick sometimes would not have been a bad thing."³⁰ Among the items left behind by the 12th Illinois were their tents and band equipment. A trooper in that regiment remembered "We missed the tents afterward, but managed to get along without the band."³¹ And a Rhode Islander recalled that they "pulled out of Harper's Ferry leaving everything, but our overcoats."³²

At about 7:30 P.M. everything was ready, the troopers edgy and anxious to get started. Colonel Miles was feeling edgy too. He was worried about the infantry. If they got wind of the cavalry pulling out he was afraid he might have an open mutiny on his hands. In light of this he called the cavalry commanders to his office for a final briefing. They were to go without any led horses or bugle calls, quietly and quickly.³³ In this particular instance, Colonel Miles did have good reason for worry. Just that evening some of the infantry officers had paid him a call. They did not see the point of staying inside The Ferry and being butchered by Jackson's artillery. They urged either surrender or a chance to try and cut their way out. Miles averted an incident by showing them the last telegram he had received from Halleck back in Washington. Halleck had ordered him to "hold out at all hazards and to the last extremity."³⁴

Around 8:00 P.M. that night of September 14, 1862, the cavalry finally got under way. Being senior Colonel, Arno Voss of the 12th Illinois was technically in general command, but it was Grimes Davis who rode at the head of the stripped-down column as it moved silently toward the pontoon bridge.³⁵ The weather lent a hand to Davis and his boys for the

²⁷ *Rhode Island*, p. 33.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Luff, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

³⁰ Benjamin W. Crownshield, "Cavalry in Virginia" in *Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, Papers*, XIII (1913), p. 7.

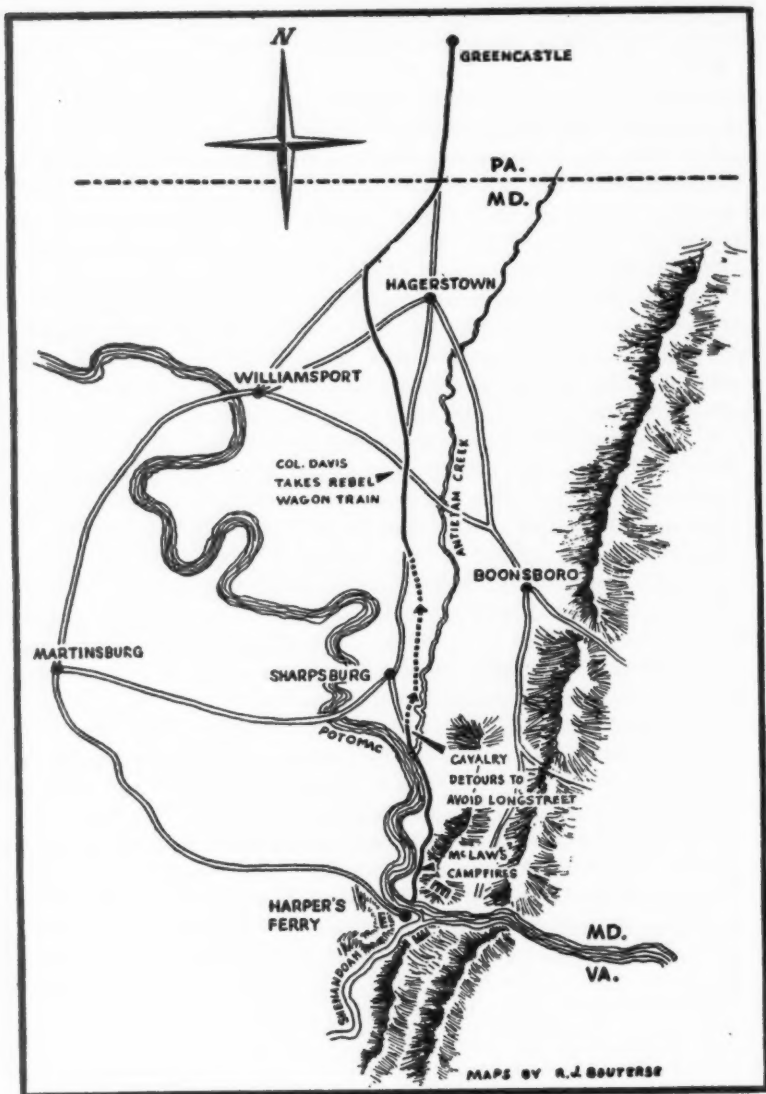
³¹ Luff, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

³² Augustus W. Corliss, *History of the 7th Squadron Rhode Island Cavalry* (Maine: 1879), p. 10.

³³ *O.R.*, pp. 583-84.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 585.

³⁵ Luff, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40.



night was moonless and intensely dark. The entire command was still keyed-up and jumpy, but then they had a right to be. The Confederates were in heavy force all along the route they were to take. McLaws still roosted on Maryland Heights, Lee was moving from Turner's Gap towards Sharpsburg and Longstreet was at Hagerstown.³⁶ It was going to take all of Ben Davis' skill and plenty of luck to bring them through.

As they approached the bridge the tension was momentarily broken by a surprise that must have almost knocked the troopers out of their saddles. The tight-fisted army suttlers, in an unprecedented display of generosity, were actually giving away papers of fine cut tobacco. Of course, their generosity was rather left-handed since the suttlers' stock would be appropriated by Stonewall Jackson's boys anyway. Nevertheless the troopers regarded the event as quite an omen, for one veteran recorded, "those little tin foil packages of tobacco were cherished during the march as a kind of good-luck piece."³⁷

The first man across the bridge was Lt. Hanson Green of Company A, 1st Maryland.³⁸ Lt. Green was in the lead of the advance along with Grimes Davis and Tom Noakes the civilian scout. He and Noakes were to act as guides, for Green had been born and raised in the region and Noakes knew the positions of most of the Confederate troops. The bridge was crossed at a walk and as soon as each company hit the far shore they dashed off at a gallop, trying to close as rapidly as possible into a column of fours.³⁹

Although Davis didn't know it at the time, his breakout almost ended right there at the bridge. When Company D of the 12th Illinois came off the causeway they missed the rear of the preceding outfit and turned right instead of left. They came charging down the wrong road, almost bowling over some Rebel pickets. Their Captain did some fast thinking and whispered an order for a quick right about, the boys hightailing it back in time to get a place in the column.⁴⁰

By the time the last man was off the bridge the column was strung out for some ten miles with everybody going at full gallop. Riding at top speed up a steep, rocky road is no mean task, particularly on a moonless night, and a member of the 12th Illinois wrote: "It was a killing pace and very hard work to keep up."⁴¹ Before long the route was being marked by dead horses, horses that had been ridden out by the furious pace. Men were constantly falling behind and as a young trooper of the 8th New

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

³⁷ Pettengill, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-9.

³⁸ Christopher A. Newcomer, *Cole's Cavalry or Three Years in the Saddle in the Shenandoah Valley* (Baltimore: Published by the author, 1895), p. 43.

³⁹ Luff, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

York described it, "sometimes we would be 20 yards from our file leader and then we would come up full drive. You could hear some tall swearing then!"⁴² Between the dust and the dark many of the boys got lost and thirteen of them wound up back at The Ferry that same night.⁴³

Luck had been with Davis as the column pounded down the "John Brown Road" and slid past McLaws on Maryland Heights, but about 10:00 P.M. the luck changed. As the advance reached a point near Sharpsburg they bumped into a small batch of Rebel pickets who let rip with a volley. Nobody was hit and Grimes led a quick charge that sent the Southerners scattering.⁴⁴ Things moved along nicely once again and then just before Sharpsburg, Davis made his only bad guess of the night.

Figuring that they were in the vicinity of McClellan's Army it was decided to reply to any challenge. This was a mistake. At the edge of town a big bunch of cavalry videttes popped up in the middle of the road. The advance hopefully let it be known that they were "Friends of the Union," and as a 12th Illinois trooper with a talent for understatement put it, "This reply was evidently unsatisfactory, for the pickets immediately fired upon us. . . ."⁴⁵ Again Davis ordered a charge and a brisk little skirmish took place with the Confederate cavalry being driven back through the main street of Sharpsburg.

The command was barely out of this scrape and moving along northward once again when they ran into more trouble. The darkness was broken open by a dancing orange fire that came rippling across the road in an angry volley. By some miracle no one was hit this time either and the advance slipped away into the darkness.⁴⁶ Davis was faced with the uncomfortable fact that the enemy was present in heavy force. While debating what to do next, luck stepped in once more. A local citizen friendly to the Union came up with the information that the column was "going right into Lee's Army."⁴⁷ Grimes wasted no time acting on this fortuitous bit of intelligence and after a whispered consultation with his guides he backtracked and set off on another road with his scout, Tom Noakes in the lead.⁴⁸

In the meantime the Confederates, who were some of Longstreet's boys, got organized enough to wheel some artillery pieces into action and sent a few shells whistling after Davis and his troopers. With the main roads sure to be patrolled by Longstreet's pickets there was only one thing to do and Davis did it. The column veered off the road into the

⁴² Norton, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

⁴³ O.R., p. 765.

⁴⁴ Luff, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

woods and fields. With his scout leading the way, Grimes took the boys on a twisting run along uneven paths and byroads. Several times they passed so close to Rebel bivouacs that they could "see the Johnnies plainly by their campfires."⁴⁹

About two miles from Williamsport the column came out of the fields and picked up the Hagerstown Turnpike. Now, the boys were riding silently along under bright starlight . . . falling asleep in the saddle . . . awakening with a start to find they had lost their place in column . . . spurting off to regain it and then falling asleep again.⁵⁰ In the 8th New York Grimes Davis had a reputation for being quite a smoker. Whenever he went into combat he kept an old clay pipe clamped in his mouth long after it was smoked out.⁵¹ He must have carried it locked between his teeth this night as he rode with the advance, wondering if he could bring his command through.

The peculiar, murky half-light of early dawn found the dozing Union cavalry moving down the Hagerstown Turnpike at a fairly good rate considering their exhausted condition. Off the road a short distance were the smoldering fires of another large Confederate bivouac. The column passed so close that they could hear the sounds of a few early risers stirring about.⁵² What with a night of hard riding and the damp dawn chill even a cup of that incredibly bad Rebel coffee probably would have tasted good. At about this same moment General William N. Pendleton, commanding Longstreet's reserve artillery, crossed Davis' track about eight miles north of Sharpsburg. General Pendleton later reported that the Union cavalry was "perhaps less than an hour ahead of us."⁵³ Of course, Grimes and his troopers were completely unaware of this danger in their rear and continued forward at a sleepy trot. Then something happened that woke them in a hurry.

Ahead of them, somewhere off towards Hagerstown, the low, almost indistinct rumbling of wheels could be heard. The boys leaned forward in their saddles with a strained listening. It could mean only one thing, the approach of artillery or wagons. The men sucked in their bellies and listened. Here was an opportunity Grimes hadn't expected. He had to decide quickly whether the prize would be worth risking the entire command. For a soldier like Colonel Davis there could be only one decision. He reeled off a few sharp orders that sent the 8th New York forming in line on the north side of the road while the 12th Illinois did the same on the south. Holding the Marylanders and Rhode Islanders in reserve,

⁴⁹ Norton, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

⁵⁰ Luff, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

⁵¹ Norton, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

⁵² Luff, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

⁵³ B. & L., p. 611, note.

Grimes rode a short distance ahead with a squadron of the 8th New York to intercept whatever it was the Confederates apparently were moving to Williamsport.⁵⁴

"Whatever it was" turned out to be no less than Longstreet's reserve ammunition train, some 97 wagons escorted by infantry with a small detachment of cavalry bringing up the rear.⁵⁵ It was still too dark for the Union troopers in the woods along the sides of the road to be spotted and the Rebel teamsters cursed their mules along in sleepy innocence. An 8th New York trooper had described Grimes Davis as being "the right man in the right place"⁵⁶ and he certainly was in this situation. With the blue of his uniform undiscernible in the deceptive light it was no trick for Davis to put his soft, Mississippi drawl to good use. He calmly ordered the driver of the lead wagon to follow some of his 8th New Yorkers to the next fork in the road. After all it wasn't a teamsters' place to question a Confederate cavalry officer well within his own lines.⁵⁷

Davis' next step was to order Captain William Frisbie of the 8th New York to ride advance on the train and turn it onto the Greencastle Pike. Being in strange territory, Captain Frisbie wasn't sure which road this was and naturally enough asked Grimes. He was ordered, in characteristic language, to "Find it and be off, without delay!"⁵⁸ Much to the relief of Captain Frisbie the Marylanders came through with a guide and he got the wagons rolling down the pike toward Pennsylvania.

Meanwhile Davis continued to play his role of Confederate officer to perfection. As each wagon passed his command post its escort was efficiently taken into tow by Union troopers and the train was headed swiftly down the Greencastle Pike with scarcely a hitch. As an officer of the 12th Illinois wrote: "A change of governments was probably never more quietly or speedily effected."⁵⁹

Actually, the capture of this train was a good example of the law of retribution, for most of the wagons had been "acquired" by Longstreet from General Pope, the Union commander who had taken such a shelling at 2nd Bull Run the month before. When Grimes Davis and his boys found time to examine their haul they discovered that the wagons were loaded with quite an assortment of scrap metal. There were pieces of chain, spikes, old horse shoes; just about everything that could be jammed down the muzzle of a cannon was represented.⁶⁰ Also represented was the Confederate infantry. About two hundred of them had crawled

⁵⁴ Luff, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

⁵⁵ B. & L., p. 613.

⁵⁶ Norton, *op. cit.*, p. 613.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁵⁸ Luff, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁶⁰ *Rhode Island*, p. 37.

into the wagons to ride. Most were rank and file G.I.'s, but two were general officers. The capture didn't matter at all to one of them, for he had been killed at the Battle of South Mountain the day before.⁶¹ The other, a Brigadier, turned out to be a former acquaintance of Colonel Davis. After reminiscing a bit about Old Army days the general asked Davis to let him return to his command, for old time's sake. Grimes' reply was short and final. "No, sir. You will go with me."⁶² He went.

When it became fully light some of the Rebel wagon drivers woke up to the fact that maybe things weren't as they should be. A few asked their smiling Union escorts what regiments they belonged to and when they got answers like the 8th New York and 12th Illinois they were *sure* things were not as they should be. Some tried to ditch their wagons but got blunt orders to keep going or be shot.⁶³ And a trooper rode on each side of every wagon with a drawn revolver just to make sure those orders were carried out. Colonel Davis then dispatched Company I, 8th New York to act as rear guard. He instructed the company commander, Captain W. H. Healy, to keep stragglers up and burn all wagons that broke down. Captain Healy later reported that he had "burned five."⁶⁴

As Davis moved his catch down the last 6 miles to the Pennsylvania state line the Confederate cavalry in his rear began to act up. Earlier they hadn't been able to do much about the capture of the train, but their hurried call for help had brought reinforcements that included two light artillery pieces.⁶⁵ Grimes sent the 12th Illinois on a charge that broke up the Rebel concentration for a while, but the Southerners were a stubborn lot and continued to harass him until he got the last wagon across the Pennsylvania border.⁶⁶

Grimes brought the command creaking and bouncing into Greencastle, Pennsylvania, about 10:00 A.M. the morning of the 15th, an hour after the Union garrison back at Harper's Ferry had surrendered to Stonewall Jackson.⁶⁷ Davis would have been happy to know that the Confederates showed disappointed surprise at finding so few horses there.⁶⁸ When the citizens of Greencastle realized the column was not some of Longstreet's hungry, wild-eyed raiders come to loot their food cellars they joyfully hailed the boys as first class heroes. People began lining the road, sounding out with resounding cheers every few minutes as they passed up fruit, cakes and pies.⁶⁹ Later on every house in town was

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Norton, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

⁶³ Luff, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

⁶⁴ Norton, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

⁶⁵ Pettengill, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ B. & L., pp. 614-15.

⁶⁸ O.R., p. 766.

⁶⁹ Luff, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-6.



thrown open to both officers and men and a round of feasting went on through the night. About then the cavalry was thinking that this was one fine way to fight a war.⁷⁰

At the height of the celebration, Company I, 8th New York, got quite a shock when one of their comrades, a certain Private Abraham Lonck, turned up after being left for dead some miles back. Lonck was one of these soldiers with a talent for getting into trouble. During the march he had managed to get himself almost drowned twice and then climaxed the evening by being blown out of one of the wagons Captain Healy had set afire. Appearing suddenly minus his beard, hair and eyebrows, he announced proudly, "Captain, I was killed three times tonight, but here I am ready for all the rations I can get!"⁷¹

All in all, Grimes Davis could feel mighty proud of himself and his boys. He had led them 50 or 60 miles through heavily patrolled Rebel territory in 14 hours, topping off the exploit with the capture of some very valuable supplies. All this he had done with generally unseasoned troops and with the loss of just 178 men missing, most of whom turned up afterwards. Not one man was lost due to enemy action.⁷² The breakout had been marked by unusual boldness, skill of execution and outstanding discipline—a discipline that was very rare in the army at that time. But then, Davis was the sort of commander who once kept his 8th New York under artillery fire for 15 minutes just to toughen them up.⁷³

The escape from Harper's Ferry was the first Union cavalry action of any magnitude and with it Grimes Davis had given the High Command a classic example of the way cavalry should be used. More important he had given his troopers the self-respect and confidence necessary to make good fighting men. Long afterwards they took pride in calling themselves "The Harper's Ferry Skedaddlers."⁷⁴ For his part in the breakout, McClellan promoted Davis with a citation for "conspicuous conduct"⁷⁵ and Longstreet wrote: "the command seems to have exercised more than usual discretion and courage."⁷⁶ High tribute from so famous an adversary.

In the next few months Grimes Davis came to be regarded as "one of the best subordinate cavalry commanders in the army,"⁷⁷ distinguishing himself for "sagacity, wonderful powers of endurance, and unsurpassed

⁷⁰ Norton, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁷² Luff, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

⁷³ Norton, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

⁷⁴ Luff, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

⁷⁵ O.R., p. 802.

⁷⁶ Pettengill, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

⁷⁷ William N. Pickerill, *History of the Third Indiana Cavalry* (Indianapolis: Aetna printing co., 1906), p. 73.

bravery."⁷⁸ A professional in every sense of the word, Davis was cut from the same bolt as Sheridan, Wilson, Buford, Merritt and Custer. Unfortunately, his brilliant promise was never fulfilled. It ended in a little open space between the river and woods at Beverly Ford, Virginia, on June 9, 1863. Leading a brigade of Buford's division, Grimes was killed in the first volley of a vicious cavalry fight against his Academy classmate Jeb Stuart. His last words were to his old regiment: "Stand firm, 8th New York!"⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Willard Glazier, *3 Years in the Federal Cavalry* (New York: R. H. Ferguson & Co., 1873), p. 220.

⁷⁹ Norton, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

Ulysses S. Grant III, grandson of President Ulysses S. Grant, graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1903, and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant. In his army career he has had various assignments here and abroad; this paper is an expression of his strong interest in the Civil War.

Civil War: Fact and Fiction *

ULYSSES S. GRANT III

I APPRECIATE MORE THAN I CAN SAY the privilege and honor of being your guest tonight and of being permitted to address you on a subject very close to my heart. As I am not a historian, but only an interested reader and student of history to the limited extent that a busy professional life has permitted, I speak to you with humility and deference for the superior exact knowledge I know many of you have. And yet, having inherited a certain family connection with the Civil War and a special interest in its history, I venture to put before you some thoughts that have come to me as an amateur, hoping that you may find them worthy of your consideration as students of the great events that occurred in 1861 to 1865.

While in Cincinnati last summer for the annual Encampment of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, a newspaper reporter asked me: "Why all this interest in the Civil War? Why are so many books and articles being written about it?"—Well, I gave him the obvious answer: the Civil War was OUR war, it all took place right here, where we can visit the battlefields and the countryside in which it occurred. It is a little like the hometown of the man who, in singing its praises and pointing out its importance, concluded with the statement "and most important of all, it contains my home!"

Then it was the first MODERN WAR, the first war in which a nation as a whole was engaged, in which everyone had some part or connection; the first war in which the invention of the telegraph permitted quick communication and the simultaneous control of armies in widely sepa-

* An address delivered before the Civil War Round Table of New York City, January 24, 1956.

rated theaters of operation with timely reports of events in the newspapers; the first in which the existence of railroads made possible the shifting of large bodies of troops from one theater to another, and the supply of large armies over great distances; the first in which improvements in small arms and cannon called for men in battle to seek cover immediately; the first in which ironclads and submarine mines (then misnamed torpedoes) took an effective part; the first in which cavalry fought effectively on foot, and was used in mass as a fast moving striking force, the precursor of the armored division; the first in which army and navy operated jointly in winning victories; the first in which many new inventions in arms appeared and played an important part, such as the rifled musket and cannon; and finally, the first in which systematic and organized provision was made for the care and evacuation of the wounded. We might add that it was probably the last in which a general could command his army personally on the field of battle, and the last in which official records were sufficiently few and so scattered that you and I can in our busy days cover the records of an event or operation more or less comprehensively.

All of these facts make its study fascinating and interesting, as the salability of books and articles on the subject proves; but aside from this it was an epoch-making event in our history and in the history of the development of popular government. As such it is most important that it be taught and taught *correctly* in our schools and colleges. In the world crisis in which we find ourselves today, it is most important that knowledge of the sacrifices and suffering, which the preservation of our representative form of government cost and our fathers and grandfathers thought worthwhile for its preservation, should be appreciated by all Americans and should be learned by those citizens of today whose forefathers were then still under the heel of other types of government. Nothing else will so inspire our people to be good Americans, to meet with the same determination and fortitude the problems of the future as sustained our fathers and grandfathers in meeting the nation's problems in the past.

Indeed, "How is the spirit of a free people to be formed and animated," as Edward Everett said, "and cheered but out of the storehouse of its historical recollections?" And so, you and I have a duty today, to pass on to our fellow citizens and to other nations an understanding of these United States and of the patriotism and wisdom which have made it possible, and not to allow ourselves to bask in the satisfaction, as Leigh Hunt put it, "to think of others nobly doing their duty while I am following the bent of my own inclinations." For, according to George Washington, "the preservation of the sacred fire of liberty and the destiny of the republican model of government are justly considered deeply, and

perhaps finally staked, on the experiment entrusted to the American people."

Now I venture to submit that it is not enough for the story to be told in glowing terms, but it is essential that it be told right and truthfully. Indeed, too often "it is not the facts which guide the conduct of men, but their opinions about the facts, which may be entirely wrong. We can only make them right by discussion." (Norman Angell) And so I would discuss with you tonight the danger of the falsification of Civil War history that seems to be threatening us. My grandfather once said, "I would like to see truthful history written, and history will do credit to the courage, endurance and soldierly ability of the American citizen, no matter what section of the county he hailed from, or in what ranks he fought." That is the goal it seems to me which our many Civil War Round Tables should strive for, and they should be a great force in our reunited America against the prevarications to which authors seem to be too often led by the temptation arising from the salability of mere sensationalism. It is perhaps only natural that professional writers should sometimes write fiction, when they pretend to write history, led on by preconceived ideas and the knowledge that in a competitive market what the French call a *succes de scandale* will sell well. But while we may be charitable and make allowances for the authors, it is certainly our duty to do our mite, each of us, to set the story straight.

One general tendency that I cannot understand, is the manifest effort to belittle some men or even either side, in order to make the opponent or other side seem more heroic, and which to my mind has just the contrary result. Neither Grant nor Lee gains anything by belittling his opponent. On the contrary each gains by an appreciation of the genius of the other. My temerity in broaching this subject to you is only justified by the fact that your president, my good friend Mr. Pemberton, last year at our Washington Round Table nobly defended the reputation and military ability of his grandfather, and I was glad of the opportunity for him to do so. The fact that General Pemberton put up such an able defense of Vicksburg, in spite of the limiting directions of Jefferson Davis and the failure of Johnston to make any effectual attempt to relieve him, to my mind, only adds to the skill and resourcefulness of the victor. I do not know enough about Johnston's troubles to express any opinion as to his inadequacy at the time, but I have always felt that General Pemberton deserved much more credit than has been generally accorded him by either Northern or Southern writers.

But aside from this specific case, there is the too obvious inclination of our present day historians, or writers of Civil War history, to take as gospel truth anything that is written, without duly weighing the circumstances under which it was written and the possible intention of the

writer, even though he may have personally been unaware of any such intention. This tendency is apparently especially compelling if his written statement is derogatory of someone else. There were strong animosities, jealousies and at times even vitriolic vindictiveness on the part of some of our leaders on both sides. Their emotional statements, written under pressure to justify themselves, seem to have a special fascination for some of the authors of today. They are picked up, repeated and mouthed with apparent gusto. And thus history as known to the public is "humanized" perhaps but certainly distorted.

Thus history has a tendency to become the "fable agreed upon," as Napoleon defined it, or Carlyle's "distillation of rumor." We may concur with Pericles as to how "very difficult is it to trace and find out the truth of anything by history"; but it seems to me an obligation resting on all the members of our Civil War Round Tables to try to find the truth about Our War and to try to dispel the untruths that are constantly creeping into the story.

For instance, too many continue to repeat much of the false information published in Whitelaw Reid's article on the Battle of Shiloh, written by a sick man sometime after the battle, which he had seen only from the standpoint of The Skulkers at Pittsburgh Landing, rather than the much more veracious account that appeared in the *New York Herald* on April 10, 1862, and was repeated in other papers, and which was written by a man who had evidently actually been on the battlefield. As General Sherman wrote my grandfather (February 5, 1885): "Whitelaw Reid was stampeded early, and his account is that of a 'fugitive'." But the more imaginative of the two reports has crept unjustifiably into history. There were many malicious attacks made on the victor immediately after this battle. The man who had captured Forts Henry and Donelson, and now had won another victory, defeated the concentration of Confederate troops intended to wipe out his army and re-establish Confederate control over Kentucky and Tennessee, just had to be discredited—McClelland went so far as to send a special emissary, Captain Kountz, with a note of introduction to the President, to do the job—and so Shiloh became, as General Sherman put it, the most misunderstood battle of the Civil War, and perhaps is still in the popular mind as far as the latter knows aught about this battle.

It is with candid diffidence that I submit my opinion that Shiloh was the most decisive battle of the Civil War: (a) The last dangerous concentration of Confederate armies in the West was effected there, sufficiently strong to have defeated the less numerous Union Army and then turn on Buell, who was dragging his feet; (b) Buell finally did get there to take part in the second day's fight and help inflict such a defeat on the Confederates that they evacuated Corinth even some six weeks after-

wards, not feeling strong enough to hold that heavily fortified and important railroad center; (c) had Grant's army at Shiloh been really defeated the criticism and abuse heaped upon him could hardly have been resisted by the President and he would inevitably have been relegated to some American Blois; (d) with a less enterprising and resourceful general in command in the West, it is fair to assume that Vicksburg could not have been taken, and the war in the West would have gone on backwards and forwards, as it had in the East from 1861 to 1863; (e) under these circumstances and without definite victory either in the eastern or western theatre, the North might have got tired of the apparently hopeless struggle, and Secession might have succeeded.

But time is getting on and I must abandon such speculation and content myself with one specific instance of the unreliability of the written word, and the necessity to check it before accepting it for a fact. In his address in Richmond on May 7, 1953, Douglas S. Freeman, the noted historian of Lee, gave us wise and timely warning of "the difficulties that a historian of the War of 1861-65 encounters" and of the critique of available information that is necessary. It was published in the first issue of *Civil War History* and I commend it to you. It is, therefore, somewhat astonishing that Benjamin P. Thomas, who did such a swell job with his own volume "Abraham Lincoln," should have been a party to the publication recently of that manifestly unreliable "Three Years with Grant,"* and that our good friend Bruce Catton, whose "A Stillness at Appomattox" was such a delightful work of art, should have quoted from it at length, especially the apparently least truthful parts, and this in the face of Freeman's emphatic caution against accepting *prima facie* the accounts of a witness writing twenty years afterwards and who "almost always . . . adorns his story with every telling, until it becomes exceedingly difficult to ascertain the fabric of fact that underlies the embroidery of fancy."

Such indeed is the case of Cadwallader, whose manuscript reminiscences written 34 years afterwards, reduced by the editor to readable size by the omission of over a third (doubtless the least sensational parts), has now been published. That the author called his manuscript "Four Years with Grant," which the editor has changed to "Three Years" in order to make the exaggeration a bit less obvious, would be unimportant except that the author's "Four Years," covering a period of only approximately 2½ years when he was at the General's headquarters, is first hand evidence of his inaccuracy and readiness to use a headline contrary to fact. Then he starts his story with the quotation *in extenso* of a message (which he misnames a special order) to General Sherman from General

* Sylvanus Cadwallader, *Three Years With Grant* . . . Edited, and with an introduction and notes by Benjamin P. Thomas, New York: Knopf, 1955.

Grant, which must be counterfeit—no record of it can be found and its very form is self-convicting. That General Grant brought the Isham article to Sherman's attention is apparent from Sherman's letter of August 17, 1862, replying to the former's letter of the 4th not received until the 16th. Cadwallader disclaims having any of his papers and records available when writing these reminiscences, but here presumes to quote one with exactitude—perhaps it is characteristic of a "superb reporter and a born journalist," as Thomas calls him, to supply from his imagination what he cannot furnish from the record; but it is not history. Similarly, he does not hesitate to quote with errors, but with the pretense of its being verbatim, the correspondence between Grant and Lee that led to the surrender at Appomattox.

Many more instances of Cadwallader's inaccuracy and readiness to supply from his imagination as a fact what he did not exactly know might be mentioned. In my too hasty reading of his book I noted some seventeen cases of error, many of which the editor has corrected in his notes. We may perhaps overlook errors in names and dates made by a man writing from memory years after the event, but when he states that at Appomattox General Lee met General Grant at the half open door of the McLean House, "exchanged salutations, and conducted him into the front room on the left side of the hall," contrary to the reports of reliable eye witnesses who were there, and that "the staff all remained on their horses" when the Commanding General dismounted, we must not only withhold belief but may even wonder if he was actually present at the surrender interview as he alleges.

Having thus established, I hope adequately, the unreliability of this author as a historian, I venture to ask your critical examination with me of his, to my mind, quite outrageous and imaginary account of a drunken spree of my grandfather's, of which he pretends to give a circumstantial report, and compare it with the quite contrary account written by Charles A. Dana, at that time Assistant Secretary of War. When the latter wrote his *Recollections of the Civil War** he had for years been an outspoken and severe critic of President Grant and can hardly be suspected of trying to varnish the truth in his favor. He tells how on the morning of June 6, 1863, General Grant expressed his intention of going to Satartia that day and invited him to go along, how they went on horseback to Haynes' Bluff

where we took a small steamer reserved for Grant's use and carrying his flag. We had gone to within two miles of Satartia, when we met two gunboats coming down. Seeing the General's flag the officers in charge of the gunboats came aboard our steamer and asked where the General was going. I told them to

* Charles A. Dana, *Recollections of the Civil War*, New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1898.

Satartia. 'Why,' said they, 'it will not be safe. Kimball has retreated from there, and is sending all his supplies to Haynes' Bluff. The enemy is probably in the town now.' I told them Grant was sick and asleep, and that I did not want to waken him. . . . Finally I did so, but he was too sick to decide. 'I will leave it to you,' he said. I immediately said we would go back to Haynes' Bluff which we did.

The next morning [Dana continues] Grant came out to breakfast fresh as a rose, clean shirt and all, quite himself. 'Well, Mr. Dana,' he said, 'I suppose we are at Satartia now.' 'No, general,' I said, 'we are at Haynes' Bluff.' And I told him what had happened. General Grant then asked Mr. Dana to go with a party of Cavalry to Mechanicsburg to find out if it were true that Joe Johnston was advancing from Canton to the Big Black. This he did, getting back to Vicksburg the morning of the 8th.

In footnotes referring to Dana's account, Editor Thomas speaks of his having reported it "tactfully" with the insinuation that the General's sickness might have been from other than natural causes; but he fails to point out the glaring differences with Cadwallader's story, that Dana never mentions the latter's presence, that according to Dana they never went as far as Satartia, about which his footnote is in error, that Rawlins' letter was written the day before, not the day after as Thomas says, and so forth. Since it was part of Dana's special mission to inquire into the truth of the General's inclination to drink, which had been so often alleged to the President by his enemies, and since when he wrote his *Recollections*, Dana had become one of the General's most abusive critics, had there been anything like the incident Cadwallader described, he certainly would not have failed to report it in his message of June 7, 1863, to Stanton and in his later *Recollections*.

As to the General's sickness, it was an established fact that he suffered at times from terrific headaches, migrains, so severe as to make it almost impossible to think. Eaton in his *Grant, Lincoln and the Freedmen** tells of one such attack of which he was a witness; my grandfather himself and General Porter tell of one he was suffering in the last stages of the Virginia campaign when Lee's message of April 7, 1865, reached him and cured him. I have personal knowledge of what these headaches can do to one, as the tendency to be overtaken with them is about the only characteristic I can claim to have inherited. Moreover, if the cause of sickness had been that alleged by Cadwallader, there would have inevitably been some signs of a hangover, and the steps to investigate the report of Johnston's move would hardly have been taken so promptly and logically.

But let us return to Cadwallader's imaginative scandal: He claims he was coming back from Satartia on the "Diligence" (there was no such boat but there was a "Diligent") and that the General transferred to it, while

* John Eaton, *Grant, Lincoln and the Freedmen* . . . New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1907.

Dana has him on his own boat all the time and makes no mention of the meeting with Cadwallader. According to the latter, everything was quiet at Satartia and "no one was expecting General Johnston's arrival," whereas the Naval officers who met Dana told a very different story. In spite of the fact that Dana, the Assistant Secretary of War, was eminently qualified and had full authority to take charge of the situation described by Cadwallader, after the imaginary change of boats, his help was not invoked. Then, according to our "superb reporter," they actually reached Satartia contrary to Dana and he was again up against it to dissuade the General from "riding off into the enemy's lines that night," when two pages previously he had said "no Confederate troops were in that vicinity." Again this is not true, as Cadwallader would have been in Satartia the day after Kimball had had a clash with the enemy, and the day the latter reported to Rawlins that the enemy was in force at Yazoo city and had 8,000 men only six miles away.

But perhaps I bore you with so much detail; so I shall limit my remarks about Cadwallader's account of the 7th of June to point out that even a good rider who was drunk could hardly have made without accident the wild ride so picturesquely described, nor have become suddenly so sober as to have politely said "good-night in a natural manner" after reaching camp, "and started to his tent as steadily as he ever walked in his life." Surprisingly, an effort is made to support this bit of fiction with the letter Rawlins is alleged to have written his Commanding General, dated "June 6, 1863, 1 A.M.," which in fact disproves it. This was before Grant with Dana started on their trip to Satartia, and at that time Rawlins could not have had any knowledge of the happenings reported by Cadwallader, if they had been true. It is a peculiarity of this letter that a retained copy was apparently in the family letters of the writer (and the original not in those of the addressee) and that it was probably first published by James H. Wilson in his *Life of John A. Rawlins*.^{*} Not only is the time of its writing (and Rawlins was meticulous about such items of record) antecedent to the Satartia trip, but also, according to Wilson, Rawlins indicated on the retained copy by indorsement that his admonitions "were heeded at least for a season," so that Rawlins' letter actually denies his part in the return from Satartia described by Cadwallader. This is sustained by the text of the letter itself which refers only to "a glass of wine," "a box of wine in front of your tent" which Rawlins removed. In fact, this letter merely proves that Rawlins was a fanatical teetotaler and looked upon the taking of a glass of wine as evidence of drunkenness, and that, far from supporting the story of the Satartia trip, disproves it. It is perhaps pertinent that Wilson for years

^{*} James H. Wilson, *Life of John A. Rawlins*, New York: Neale Publishing Company, 1916.

was apparently a most devoted and loyal admirer of General Grant, that the latter recognized his high military ability and confidently pushed him to the front during the War, but that, when later not made Secretary of War as successor to Rawlins, Wilson's attitude changed. Having written with Dana the very flattering *Life of Ulysses S. Grant*,^{*} sale of which (I have been told) he later tried to stop by buying up the copies remaining on the market, he could hardly recant his former praise, and so had recourse to trying to establish the fable that Rawlins had really been the successful and victorious commander.

The foregoing should suffice to prove the unreliability of Cadwallader's narrative, with which I am sure your president will agree, when he reads his doubtless equally untrue statement about General Pemberton on page 328. With charity and without malice we can only picture the former successful newspaper reporter, who had been near great people when great events were happening, sitting down in his lonely sheep ranch and picturing for himself and posterity how he had played an important part in those events by recording the stories he had been telling around the stove in the corner store, "almost always" adorned "with every telling"—as Freeman put it.

Of course, I cannot help a certain indignation at this unjust vilification of my grandfather and of the man who after all did win the war and bring about the reuniting of our country, not only by his victories in the field but also by the magnanimous terms he granted at Appomattox and by his later administration as President, when he had to carry out the reconstruction legislation passed by Congress during the administration of Andrew Johnson. He was not a politician, but was a statesman, and in trying to administer the government for the good of the people as a whole he incurred the enmity of many of his own political party. In many of the reforms and policies he advocated he was ahead of his time, and again incurred violent criticism, whereas these same policies have since been adopted and history has shown him to have been right. As John Russell Young, Librarian of Congress, wrote: "The politicians understood and feared Grant. They could not use him and therefore tried to slay him. Calumny, one fears, is becoming history. This genesis of calumny will be traced some day, the historian like Layard or a Bugach Pasha, digging the truth out of rock and sand. Calumny has fallen upon the memory of Grant with Pompeian fury—lies of lava, and slag, and smoke, and fire. So that even to tell the truth about him sounds like unreasoning adulation."

But I am tonight talking about the Civil War, and merit your attention only in so far as I am able to counter this new attack on him as a war commander. For the research needed to disprove Cadwallader's wild tale,

^{*} Charles A. Dana and James H. Wilson, *Life of Ulysses S. Grant*, Springfield, Mass.: Gurdon Bill and Co., 1868.

I am indebted and give thanks to Dr. Kenneth P. Williams, who is writing that factual and carefully checked history, *Lincoln Finds a General*.^{*} But the Cadwallader story is swallowed whole by Miers in his recent book, *The Web of Victory*.^{**} So apparently there is danger that another fable, and one harmful to the correct history of our country, is about to be interpolated into the history of the Civil War. Thus we see the truth in Leigh Hunt's statement that "criticism has positive popular attractions in its cruelty, its gladiatorship and the gratification its attacks on the great give to envy and its praises to enthusiasm. Its iconoclasms, seditious and blasphemies, if well turned, tickle those whom they shock, so that the critic adds the privileges of the court jester to those of the confessor." It is only thus that I can account for these latest attacks on General Grant's character, while conceding his military qualifications.

As you all know he was both sensitive and proud, and would never reply to the criticisms and attacks made upon him. He even went so far as to insist upon his father's not replying, and I believe, once at least, explained to his friend in Washington, Washburne, that he did not write oftener of what was going on because he did not want to be publicly defended. Happily, President Lincoln was wise enough to see that the criticisms were not to be taken at face value, and so the Union was preserved.

It is interesting that on several occasions General Grant's personal intervention on the field of battle was possible even after he had a large command, something that would be out of the question today, and so he personally organized a charge at Shiloh, directed on the spur of the moment the counterattack that won the fight at Champion's Hill, and ordered Thomas to start the winning charge on Missionary Ridge that broke Bragg's center at Chattanooga. As in the latter case, afterwards in the Virginia campaign he was meticulous always to transmit his orders to the Army of the Potomac through General Meade.

Far from being the butcher he was accused of being, the losses incurred distressed him no end. Large numbers of prisoners delighted him, because they meant so many of the enemy *hors de combat* without the infliction of wounds or death. Without going into details, he secured General Lee's surrender in less than a year with fewer casualties than the aggregate others had suffered in three years without any decisive results, and saved twice as many additional deaths from disease. While some frontal attacks which were unsuccessful he regretted afterwards, they might have succeeded and, even as it was, they were probably necessary. Would the Union Army have so staunchly pressed the siege of

^{*} Kenneth P. Williams, *Lincoln Finds a General*, New York: Macmillan Co., 1950-52, 3 vol.

^{**} Earl Schenck Miers, *The Web of Victory*, New York: Knopf, 1955.

Vicksburg, if not convinced it could not be taken by assault, or would the country have stood for the delay? Could he have transferred his army to the James, if he had not first so mauled Lee at Cold Harbor that he could not counterattack while the change of base was being made?

Once the victory was won, he was the most magnanimous and kindly of victors. There are innumerable occasions of his consideration for the conquered in the territory occupied by his army. There was the old lady from Mississippi, who looked me up in my office back in the nineteen twenties to tell me how, when she was but a girl, he had saved and cared for her brother, a wounded Confederate officer secreted in their house, the first floor of which was being used for headquarters. There was the Southern lady caught in the web of war during the first advance on Vicksburg to whom he gave a pass to go home, my grandmother adding \$4,000 in Rebel currency. There was the immediate return of furniture taken by some over-zealous staff officer to fix up his headquarters. There was the permission for officers to retain their sidearms, written into the terms of surrender both at Vicksburg and Appomattox so as to save Pemberton and Lee the possible humiliation of a personal surrender—and I could cite other such incidents.

He was without personal ambition: he refused absolutely to campaign for the presidency, and when he went home the night of the election, after listening to the returns that had come in to the telegraph office in Galena, he said to his wife rather sadly, "I am afraid I am elected." He was sincere in assuring Sherman that he would gladly serve under the latter, and I have seen it stated somewhere that, when made Commander-in-Chief, he invited McClellan to take an active command. He could not bear to humiliate a fellow officer, if avoidable, as shown by the manner he handled the threatened relief of Thomas before the battle of Nashville, and the modification of Sherman's terms for the surrender of Johnston in 1865. For him the cause was always the first consideration, but always combined with serving it best without injury to others. And yet he made some bitter enemies.

Now is it not our duty, as members of the Civil War Round Tables, to prevent such fables from becoming history, to do our share to keep the record complete and correct "with charity for all and malice towards none," to avoid ourselves the temptation to accept as true and repeat the fallacies and exaggerations inspired by disappointed ambition, jealousy, and the natural desire for self justification, even when written out in deceptive detail?

It is a trite saying that wars never settle anything; but again in this the Civil War was exceptional, for it did settle two things: secession and slavery in this country. It also set an example for emulation by subsequent generations and other countries in how to end war and reconcile enmities.

However much the South may have suffered from reconstruction after Andrew Johnson, by his assumption that the executive might disregard the legislature, threw the powers of government into the hands of the radicals in Congress; at least there were no Nuremberg trials after it, no vengeance as such visited on the vanquished, so that today in true friendship I can come to you as the guest of the grandson of one of the foremost Confederate leaders, both of us having participated in foreign wars as members of our reunited country's army. This is perhaps our country's greatest contribution to world history and civilization.

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The U. S. Sanitary Commission

WILLIAM Y. THOMPSON

SAFEGUARDING THE HEALTH OF THE INDIVIDUAL SOLDIER is an integral part of present day warfare. Scientific progress, statistics and percentages, plus corps of able medical men have joined to make the American army the best cared for fighting machine in the world. The modern soldier fights not only in sanitary security but in relative comfort as well. The knitted sock from home has been replaced by bountiful government issue adequate for all needs. The services of well organized groups, such as the Red Cross, aid in softening the transition from civilian to military life.

Less than a hundred years ago, the American volunteer soldier, entering the battles of the Civil War, faced an entirely different situation. Ahead lay death from enemy bullets. Behind him plodded a medical bureau, inadequately equipped in materiel, spirit, and vision to protect him from destruction by disease. The touches of home consisted mainly of letters of encouragement from loved ones. That he would emerge from the fray a casualty was not merely a possibility — it was an almost certainty.

As the largely volunteer and untrained armies gathered, the Union Medical Department wheezed and coughed into action along old, conventional lines. Many of its members, past their prime, were still thinking in terms of limited frontier warfare. When the war increased in scope, their vision unfortunately did not expand. Meanwhile, patriotism, touched off by the firing on Fort Sumter, was running high in the Northern states. Zealous women began the collection of supplies for the benefit of the soldiers. The situation was ripe for united and guided civilian activity.

On April 25, 1861, around fifty-five women, gathered together at the New York Infirmary for Women in New York City, suggested that an attempt be made to consolidate all of the aid societies recently established

throughout the country into one central association.¹ A public meeting for this purpose was held in Cooper Institute on the morning of April 29. "Articles of Organization" were presented which united the women of New York into the "Woman's Central Association of Relief." Dr. Valentine Mott, well-known New York surgeon, was appointed president of the association and the Reverend Dr. Henry W. Bellows, Boston born Harvard graduate and prominent Unitarian minister, vice-president.²

The newly formed association lost no time in getting to work. It asked local societies to look to it for guidance. It advanced confidently to clasp hands with the Medical Department of the United States Army. A long and exhaustive list of questions pertaining to the future needs of the army was directed to the ranking medical officer of the army in New York. But this first contact between female enthusiasts and regular army brass buried under urgent preparations for war brought a dash of cold water on the aspirations of the ladies. The association was told that the Medical Department could take care of its own, and the work which the women proposed to do, although generous, would be superfluous and exaggerated in scope beyond necessity.³

The determined women were not to be denied. In conjunction with delegates of the Advisory Committee of the Boards of Physicians and Surgeons of the Hospitals of New York, and the New York Medical Association for Furnishing Hospital Supplies in Aid of the Army, representatives from women's associations went to Washington to confer with medical authorities and the War Department on the matter of volunteer aid to the army.

The Washington which the delegates entered was a city in turmoil. The sudden pressure of war and the rapid influx of troops into the capital city combined to bring perplexity and confusion.⁴ The visiting civilians saw the necessity for an efficient authority in the national army to exercise diligence in safeguarding the soldier's well-being, particularly the volunteer, who came from civilian life unlearned in the ways of the military.

On May 18, an address, written and signed by Bellows and his companions, was sent to the Secretary of War, Simon Cameron.⁵ The authors asked that a mixed commission of "civilians distinguished for their philanthropic experience and acquaintance with sanitary affairs, of medical

¹ "The Sanitary Commission," *The North American Review*, XCVIII (January, 1864), p. 154.

² Frank B. Goodrich, *The Tribute Book* (New York: Derby & Miller, 1865), pp. 72-3. Hereafter cited as *Tribute Book*.

³ "The Sanitary Commission," *op. cit.*, pp. 156-9.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

⁵ *Documents of the U. S. Sanitary Commission*, 3 volumes (New York: 1866-71), I, #1, pp. 1-4. Hereafter cited as *Commission Documents*.

men, and of military officers" be appointed by the government to consider the question of prevention of sickness and suffering among troops, and to suggest the best procedure for the public to "manifest their goodwill towards the comfort, security, and health of the Army."

The memorial was coldly received by the War Department and most of the Army Medical Bureau.⁶ To the aid of the petitioners, however, came Dr. Robert C. Wood, acting surgeon general of the Union armies. In a letter to Cameron, Wood commented favorably on the creation of such a commission as asked for by Bellows and his colleagues. He suggested that a board be set up in Washington to form the nucleus of a sanitary commission and that an officer of the army medical staff be appointed to associate with it.⁷

On June 7, 1861, the War Department tendered its approval to the establishment of a sanitary commission. The commission, wrote Cameron, will direct its inquiries to the principles and practices connected with the inspection of recruits and enlisted men, the sanitary condition of the volunteers, to the means of preserving and restoring the health and of securing the general comfort and efficiency of troops, to the proper provision of cooks, nurses, and hospitals, and to other subjects of like nature.⁸

With the approval of its formal plan of operation by the Secretary, the structure of the Commission began to take shape. Serving as president, vice-president, and treasurer of the Commission throughout the war were Bellows, Alexander Dallas Bache, and George T. Strong, respectively.

The original nine-member board was enlarged through subsequent appointments to twenty-four.⁹ During the early part of the war, the board

⁶ Such was the opinion of contemporaries. Cameron made no official statement or reply from the War Department until June 7, when he approved the creation of a sanitary commission.

⁷ *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: 1880-1901), Series 3, volume 1, pp. 224-5. Hereafter cited as O.R., followed by the series number in roman numerals, the volume number in arabic numbers, the part number (if any), and the page, as O.R., III, 1, pp. 224-5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 259. The original members of the Sanitary Commission, as recognized by Cameron, were: Bellows, Alexander Dallas Bache, Jeffries Wyman, Wolcott Gibbs, William H. Van Buren, Samuel Gridley Howe, Robert C. Wood, General G. W. Cullum, and Major Alexander E. Shiras.

George T. Strong, treasurer of the Sanitary Commission, described its first headquarters in Washington as follows: "... Our very grand official room in the Treasury Building [provided by the government], with its long, official, green-covered table and chairs ranged in official order around it, and official stationery in front of each chair. One could not sit there a moment without official sensations of dignity and red-tapery." Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey, editors, *The Diary of George Templeton Strong*, 4 volumes (New York: Macmillan, 1952), III, p. 164. Hereafter cited as *Strong's Diary*.

⁹ Charles J. Stillé, *History of the United States Sanitary Commission* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1866), p. 519.

met in Washington once every six weeks but later sessions were quarterly. The board sat through a total of twenty-three sessions of from four to five days each. The work proved so great that it became necessary to form a standing committee to act in the interim. Meetings of this group were held in New York daily except Sunday.¹⁰

The working organization of the United States Sanitary Commission underwent constant change in order to meet the demands made upon it. There remained, however, a basic structure. In charge of the Commission's vast services and directly responsible to the board and standing committee was the executive secretary. First filling this post was Frederick Law Olmsted, well-known traveler, writer, and architect. Succeeding Olmsted was Dr. J. Foster Jenkins. The third and last secretary was John S. Blatchford of New York.¹¹

Key men in the organization, through whom all activity was channeled, were the associate secretaries, the assistant secretaries, and the chief sanitary inspectors. Up to the last year of the war, the Commission maintained three associate secretaries: one in charge of the work east of the Alleghenies plus New Orleans, one in charge of the work west of the Alleghenies, and one designated Chief of Sanitary Inspection. The western secretary had headquarters in Louisville, the other two in Washington. All of the associate secretaries reported periodically to their chief, the general secretary. Coming under the immediate supervision of the associate secretaries of the East and West was the work of supply, special relief, canvassing for funds, hospital visiting, transportation, publication, the hospital directory, the chief clerk, and an accountant.

For each large division of the army, the Commission established a chief sanitary inspector. He was responsible to the Chief of Sanitary Inspection in Washington, and depending on locality, to the associate secretary of the East or West. Under each chief inspector was a battery of Commission workers: sanitary inspectors, members of the general relief corps, and dispensers of special relief. When an army was stationary, a permanent lodge was established near headquarters where supplies were stocked and distributed. If on the move, supplies were issued from

¹⁰ Henry W. Bellows, *The United States Sanitary Commission* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 187-P), p. 47.

¹¹ Olmsted resigned in 1863 to accept the position of manager for a mining company which had recently bought some holdings from General John C. Fremont. *The Sanitary Reporter. To Promote the Health, Comfort, and Efficiency of our Army and Navy*, 2 volumes (Louisville: U. S. Sanitary Commission, Western Department, 1863-5), p. 95. The first general secretary left his office with the general gratitude of his associates for a job well done.

Jenkins was asked to resign his office in April, 1865. He was described by Bellows as being "wearied out with the business cares & the personal perplexities of our service." H. W. Bellows to J. F. Jenkins, Washington, April 26, 1865 (United States Sanitary Commission Archives, Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, Box No. 638). Hereafter cited SCA, followed by the box number.

wagons, or as was the case in the early months of war, from steamboats.

To aid the associate secretaries of the East and West there were two assistant secretaries, responsible to the former but having their own sphere of individual activity. They were in charge of office employees, the property clerk, the document clerk, the office and premises, the reception and instruction of visitors, passes and transportation of agents, and supply correspondence.

Completing the organization were the members of the Statistical Department, the Historical Bureau, and the Army and Navy Claim Agency, who, with the General Accountant and an assistant secretary in New York, acted under the orders and supervision of the general secretary in Washington.¹² In 1865, two of the associate secretaries were dropped, leaving the general secretary and the associate secretary of the West to supervise all the work. The rest of the system was not changed to any marked degree.¹³

The Sanitary Commission decided early in the war to pay its employees. It was felt that this would be cheaper in the end and much more conducive to efficiency than to embrace a system of unpaid volunteers. The salary scale underwent change from time to time but levelled off into the following pattern: all officers and members of the Commission (one could work for the Commission without becoming a member) served without pay except the few who performed secretarial duties; the general secretary received \$5,000, while the pay of other secretaries ranged from \$1,800 to \$2,500; all other employees, those doing clerical work, the medical inspectors, and those employed in the relief service, both general and special, averaged \$2.00 a day, plus subsistence and travelling expenses. These employees, in early February, 1864, numbered around two hundred. Employees served at the pleasure of the Commission rather than for any specified length of time, although in the field relief service, the Commission declined to accept service for a period less than three months. For short periods, usually immediately after a battle, the Commission engaged auxiliary relief agents, who received no compensation but got travelling expenses and subsistence.¹⁴

In addition to the members and employees of the Sanitary Commission,

¹² For an easy grasp of the Commission's organization, see the chart in Katharine P. Wormeley's *The Sanitary Commission of the United States Army: A Succinct Narrative* . . . (New York: 1864), (no pagination). Hereafter cited as *Succinct Narrative*.

¹³ *Commission Documents*, II, #86, pp. 3-6.

¹⁴ *Bulletins of the U. S. Sanitary Commission*, 3 volumes (New York: 1866), I, #8, p. 227. Hereafter cited as *Commission Bulletins*; A. J. Bloor to Mary P. Twining, February 8, 1864 (SCA, #839); J. S. Blatchford to Barnard (?), March 25, 1865 (SCA, #837); "The U. S. Sanitary Commission," *All The Year Round*, XII (December, 1864), pp. 439-43. Stillé commented that the average number constantly employed was about three hundred. Stillé, *op. cit.*, pp. 505-6.

there were around eight hundred associate members. As a general rule, the associate members were not regular participants in Commission Work although some aided in the gathering of supplies. They contributed, however, a great deal of prestige to the movement by the formal declaration of their support and their interest in it. A partial listing sparkles with distinguished personages: John Bigelow, William Cullen Bryant, General Benjamin F. Butler, Peter Cooper, Cyrus W. Field, General James A. Garfield, General U. S. Grant, Horace Greeley, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, James Russell Lowell, Professor Benjamin Silliman, Henry Ward Beecher, General George A. Custer, Schuyler Colfax, and Edward Everett.¹⁵

The Sanitary Commission was a federal type organization. It worked through branches and auxiliary societies which exercised local autonomy but recognized the executive board as the supreme authority over matters concerning all branches. The main business of the branches was to collect stores for distribution under the direction of national officers. Local relief was left to the direction of branch officers.¹⁶

The work of the Commission was not confined to the United States. In November, 1863, and in March, 1864, branches were formed in Paris and London, respectively, by Americans residing abroad. The branches aided the overall work by raising money and presenting the Union cause in a favorable light in England and on the continent.¹⁷ Similar societies had been founded by Americans in Montreal and Toronto in 1862.¹⁸

During the war, there were very few towns in the North which did not have a relief society of some kind. Many of the local organizations worked through the United States Sanitary Commission. Others channeled their efforts through two large, independent bodies, the Western Sanitary Commission, and the United States Christian Commission for the Army and

¹⁵ *Commission Documents*, II, #74, pp. 1-22.

¹⁶ *Commission Bulletins*, I, #7, p. 197.

¹⁷ The correspondence pertaining to these branches is quite extensive. For location of pertinent material, see the "Catalogue of the United States Sanitary Commission, 1878", Manuscript Division, New York Public Library. A convenient summary of the work in England may be found in Edmund C. Fisher, *The English Branch of the United States Sanitary Commission* (London: 1865). Fisher states that 4,660 pounds sterling in cash and 3,000 pounds sterling in kind were raised by the London branch. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

The financial statement of the treasurer of the Commission lists \$65,976.44 as being the contribution of Europe to the work. This apparently includes England, also. *Statement of the Receipts and Disbursements of the United States Sanitary Commission, from June 27th, 1861, to May 14th, 1878* (Manuscript Division, NYPL). Hereafter cited as *Commission Financial Report*.

¹⁸ Thurston, U. S. Consulate General, Montreal, to F. N. Knapp, Montreal, July 9, 1864 (Sanitary Commission Archives, Box No. 787, Columbia University microfilm). Hereafter cited as SCA, # , CU.

Navy. Still others worked inside state organizations, which limited their service to state soldiers.¹⁹

It was the intent of the delegates of the three New York organizations when they first journeyed to Washington to make the consideration of preventive sanitary measures paramount to the question of soldier relief. That this initial endeavor became overshadowed by other activity was not the plan or desire of the Sanitary Commission. The exigencies of four years of war broadened the role of the Commission from that of guardian of the volunteer army into an agency participating in virtually all war-time activity. The business of sanitation remained of great consequence but in many instances as a tributary branch rather than the mainstream.

Two things were disconcerting to the Commission in the field of sanitation. One was the statistics pertaining to deaths from diseases in previous wars; the other, the inefficient organization of the Army Medical Department. During the Mexican War, ten soldiers died from disease to every one killed in battle.²⁰ The Commission was also aware that Florence Nightingale and a British sanitary commission had considerably reduced the death rate from disease in the British army during the Crimean War through enforced sanitary measures.²¹ As for the Medical Department, incompetence and senility flowed from the top of the Army Medical Staff down into the ranks of state surgeons, as capable of devastating armies as Confederate bullets.²² Alarmed, the Sanitary Commission rolled up its sleeves and went to work.

It attempted to shake the people of the North into action by circulars bespeaking such sentiments as "death is already in the breeze" for one-fifth of the army due to ineffective sanitation.²³ Questionnaires were sent to the governors of the Northern states in July, 1861, to determine the number of soldiers to be in the field that summer and what measures should be taken in order to arrive at the highest sanitary level.²⁴

That same summer, Dr. Bellows undertook a survey of the armed forces both in the East and West in order to get information of the "ordinary and average condition of the force, to enable him the better to direct subsequent inquiry. . . ."²⁵ Although conducted in summary fashion, the survey convinced Bellows that much had to be done by the

¹⁹ L. P. Brockett, *The Philanthropic Results of the War in America . . .* (New York: Sheldon, 1865), pp. 50-4.

²⁰ George Worthington Adams, *Doctors in Blue* (New York: H. Schuman, 1952), p. 3.

²¹ Elisha Harris, *The United States Sanitary Commission* (Boston: Crosby and Nichols, 1864), p. 6.

²² Adams, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-23.

²³ *Commission Documents*, I, #16, pp. 1-2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, #8, pp. 1-4.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, #17, p. 1.

army and the Sanitary Commission to safeguard the health of the soldiers.²⁶

In late July, the Sanitary Commission set up a corps of sanitary inspectors to visit encampments and report back to Commission headquarters.²⁷ Guiding their efforts was a questionnaire of 180 items to be filled in by each inspector. To each was also furnished a copy of *Army Regulations; a Report on Military Hygiene and Therapeutics* and the Commission's *Rules for Preserving the Health of the Soldiers*.²⁸

In all, 1,482 camp inspections were made before the work was stopped in early 1864. By that time, sufficient sanitary progress had been accomplished and the army had inspectors of its own.²⁹ The results were "carefully tabulated, and suitable digests prepared by an accomplished actuary."³⁰

These figures were but a part of the overall statistical work of the Commission. Other endeavors included: determining the "sickness and mortality of the whole army, from the beginning of the war, to the time the last returns had been received in the Adjutant General's Office"; and conducting "social and physiological examinations of soldiers. . . ." Confederate and Union, in order to establish "comparisons between the physical, social, and moral condition of northern soldiers, with those of the south; and between both and those of European armies . . ."³¹ The work was started under Olmsted and concluded under Dr. Benjamin A. Gould after the war.³²

Hospitals early received the attention of the Sanitary Commission. A special investigation was made of hospitals in the vicinity of Washington which resulted in general improvement.³³ The construction of hospitals, concerning which there were varied and conflicting theories, also interested the Commission. Its efforts, plus those of the new surgeon general, Dr. William A. Hammond, aided in the development of a hospital system which was recognized as one of the finest in existence.³⁴

The Sanitary Commission also gave credit for the invention of the

²⁶ "Inspection Report of Bellows" (SCA, #638).

²⁷ *Commission Bulletins*, II, #12, p. 401.

²⁸ These were two in a series of twenty essays prepared by the Commission for the benefit of medical officers of the army. They were collectively published as *Military, Medical and Surgical Essays* . . . (Washington: 1865).

²⁹ Adams, *op. cit.*, p. 199; Bellows, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

³⁰ *Commission Documents*, I, #40, p. 6.

³¹ *Commission Bulletins*, II, #13, pp. 401-2.

³² The two volume publication was designated the *Sanitary Memoirs of the War of the Rebellion*, 2 volumes (New York: U. S. Sanitary Commission, 1867-69). Bellows called these endeavors "the most scientific and permanently valuable part of the work of the Sanitary Commission . . ." Bellows, *op. cit.*, p. 40. Strong agreed but commented that "for general reading, I prefer Walter Scott . . ." *Strong's Diary*, IV, p. 244.

³³ Harris, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-4; Adams, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-53.

"hospital car" to one of its members, Dr. Elisha Harris. Wishing to mitigate the pain caused to the wounded by the rough jostling in railroad cars, Harris devised a scheme whereby the common stretcher on which wounded men were brought in was converted into a hanging bed suspended on the sides of each car by rubber straps or gutta percha strings. Thirty of these make-shift beds were arranged on the sides of each car.³⁵

With the stepped-up tempo of warfare increasing the number of wounded, the Commission, in September, 1862, resolved to undertake inspections of the 184 general army hospitals throughout the country. The fact that the army had increased but the staff of medical inspection had not, necessitated "intelligent assistance from civil life. . . ."³⁶ Circulars were sent to more than one hundred doctors asking them to participate. Although the promised remuneration would be slight in comparison to ordinary incomes, fifty-nine agreed to serve, and, with Dr. Henry G. Clark of Boston as inspector-in-chief, formed the hospital corps.

The final report, submitted to the medical committee of the Commission in May, 1863, contained 2,500 folio pages.³⁷ On the whole, the three preliminary reports and the final report were favorable, finding the hospitals in creditable condition and the cooperation given by the army to the inspectors excellent. Clark, however, pointed out that there were three aspects of hospitalization which needed further investigation: "the expediency of delaying or hastening the removal '*en masse*' of large numbers of sick and wounded men from the field to the general hospitals . . .," the best method of administering general hospitals, and the best method of constructing general hospitals.³⁸

The Commission participated in the fight over the reorganization of the Medical Bureau. As early as September 10, 1861, Bellows wrote General George B. McClellan, asking him to use his influence in getting the War Department to effect changes in the Medical Bureau and in the administration of the medical affairs of the Army of the Potomac. The Commission president stated that old men around seventy were the principal directors of the Bureau, and that

their business according to our experience is usually carried on in a manner & style becoming a country apothecary, rather than a vast military Bureau.

In the end the Nation will hold the Secy of War [Cameron] chiefly responsible for the slackness, the inability, & the defects of this Bureau — a portion of his Department — and one more intimately [associated] with the household affections of this country than any other.³⁹

³⁵ Bellows, *op. cit.*, p. 12; William H. Read, *The Heroic Story of the United States Sanitary Commission* (Boston: G. H. Ellis Co., 1910), pp. 13-14.

³⁶ *Commission Documents*, I, #56, p. 3.

³⁷ Bellows, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

³⁸ *Commission Documents*, II, #79, p. 12.

³⁹ H. W. Bellows to G. E. McClellan, Washington, September 10, 1861 (SCA, #638).

The Commission group pressed their attack through letters and visits to the Military Committees of both houses of Congress, the new Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, and President Lincoln. Strong and Bellows called on Lincoln on January 28, 1862, and asked that in the event new legislation gave him the power to appoint medical men, to "hear us before making any appointments." Lincoln said he would but, commented Strong, "it was a cool thing."⁴⁰

On February 27, the Senate passed a reorganization bill and requested the concurrence of the House of Representatives.⁴¹ Encouraged by the Senate's action, a Commission delegation appeared before the House Military Committee on March 17 and urged approval of the bill.⁴² Objections by the House to some features of the bill sent it to a conference committee, where a few changes were made. Both houses finally concurred and on April 16, Lincoln approved and signed.⁴³

The new law called for an enlargement in the personnel of the medical corps, including a provision for eight medical inspectors. Appointments were to be made by the president by and with the consent of the Senate "from the medical corps of the army, or from the surgeons in the volunteer service, without regard to their ranks when so selected, but with sole regard to qualifications." Whenever the medical inspector general or any of the medical inspectors deemed a medical corps officer disqualified for promotion to a higher grade, or unfit for the performance of his professional duties, he was to be reported by the surgeon general for examination to a medical board.⁴⁴

Although the new law did not meet all the demands of the Sanitary Commission, it resulted in a great improvement in the organization and administration of the Medical Department. The much-criticized surgeon general, Clement A. Finley, was removed from office and the candidate backed by the Commission and McClellan, thirty-four year old William A. Hammond, elevated to his post.

By the spring of 1863, Hammond had effected many salutary changes and innovations in the administration and personnel of the Medical Department.⁴⁵ But, unfortunately, he had provoked the opposition of Stanton and influential people in army medical circles. He and the Secre-

⁴⁰ *Strong's Diary*, III, p. 204.

⁴¹ *Journal of the Senate of the United States of America . . . Second Session . . . Thirty-Seventh Congress . . .* (Washington: 1861), p. 250. Hereafter cited as *Journal of the Senate, 37th Congress, 2d session*.

⁴² *Strong's Diary*, III, p. 210.

⁴³ *Journal of the Senate, 37th Congress, 2d session*, pp. 382-3, 385, 393, 394, 405.

⁴⁴ *The Statutes at Large . . . of the United States of America . . .*, XII (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1865), pp. 378-9.

⁴⁵ Adams, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-9.

tary of War differed over the selection of medical inspectors, thus causing postponement of their nomination. Bellows said the delay was due to "political and personal considerations [by Stanton], which are wickedly out of place. . . ."⁴⁶

In late 1863, Hammond was removed from duty on the grounds that he had acted "irregularly in giving certain contracts for hospital supplies."⁴⁷ The Sanitary Commission, which like Hammond had fallen from Stanton's grace, rose to the defense of its protégé through letters to Lincoln and members of Congress. Hammond demanded a court-martial which was granted in January, 1864. The surgeon general was found guilty of ungentlemanly conduct, the second of two counts brought against him.⁴⁸

One writer sums up Hammond's release as follows:

The old-guard's victory had long-lasting effects. As the older men began to get the important posts the best young men tended to leave the service. There was an end of new ideas, and after 1865 a partial relapse into antebellum lethargy. The Department slumbered until the sudden crisis of the Spanish-American War rudely awakened it.⁴⁹

At the outset the Sanitary Commission resolved to look for support to the charity and benevolence of the American people rather than seek aid from the government. It had no desire to become mixed up in the political arena through financial channels. As soon as the Commission was organized, it began to receive articles for use in hospitals from all over the North. It became evident that depots would have to be established at various places in the loyal states to which volunteer donations could be conveniently sent. In the fall of 1861, receiving stations were set up in New York, Boston, Washington, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, and Wheeling.⁵⁰

As the war increased in momentum and scope, the importance of the department of supply loomed even larger. To secure harmony and effi-

⁴⁶ H. W. Bellows to Preston King, May 9, 1862 (SCA, #638). From an unpleasant interview with Stanton a few days later, Bellows gained the impression that the Secretary was a "man with a brain in a very dangerous state of irritability . . .," a man with "an internal temper & cerebral condition which will come to some disagreeable end — if it continues to increase." H. W. Bellows to Doctor . . . (?), Washington, May 13, 1862 (SCA, #638).

⁴⁷ Allan Nevins, "The United States Sanitary Commission and Secretary Stanton," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, LXVII (October, 1941-May, 1948), p. 414.

⁴⁸ The first was "disorders and neglects to the prejudice of good order and military discipline." *An Official Copy of Charges and Specifications preferred against Brigadier General William A. Hammond, Surgeon General, United States Army* (SCA, #640).

⁴⁹ Adams, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁵⁰ Stillé, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

ciency from the volunteer donors of the country, the Commission asked delegates of aid societies to meet in Washington and confer with its leaders on how best to perfect a supply organization. This conference, called the Woman's Council, was held in November, 1862. Dr. John S. Newberry, organizer of the western division of the Sanitary Commission, and Olmsted met with the assembled group. It was resolved that auxiliary associations of the Commission should be formed in all of the towns of the North and that goods donated be thrown into a common stock for the most effective use.⁵¹

Another step toward completing the supply system was the appointment of men in different localities as associate members of the Commission. Their job was to assist in the establishment of auxiliary associations and to guide those already in existence. When depots were set up, the associate members were asked to take charge of them.⁵²

By 1863, there were twelve branch depots of the Sanitary Commission. Each of these was a focal point for numerous aid societies in its neighborhood, sometimes as many as twelve hundred being tributaries to a single depot.⁵³

Stores sent to these branches were opened, repacked, and stamped "U. S. Sanitary Commission." They were then held subject to requisitions of officers at the two central distributing depots, Washington and Louisville. At the central depots, articles were accumulated not only to supply the current wants of the army but also to form a reserve stock available in case of a great battle.⁵⁴ Each week the branch agencies sent an account of the stock on hand and the amount distributed by each branch to the central office in Washington, and the relief agents, to whom the supplies had been sent, mailed in receipts for the same. Thus close supervision was maintained all along the line.⁵⁵

The people of the North contributed generously to the Sanitary Commission, both in cash and in supplies. The New York Woman's Central Association of Relief, which became auxiliary to the Commission, was a large donor. From May 1, 1861, to February 1, 1864, supplies worth \$655,337 and \$36,805.71 in cash were given through this agency. The Philadelphia branch supplied sanitary stores exceeding \$200,000 in value through 1863.⁵⁶ The supplies distributed by the Commission in the West prior to September 1, 1865, amounted to \$5,123,256.29.⁵⁷ Charles J.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁵³ *Tribute Book*, p. 84.

⁵⁴ Stillé, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

⁵⁵ Katharine P. Wormeley, *The United States Sanitary Commission: A Sketch of its Purposes and its Works* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1863), p. 56. Hereafter cited as Wormeley, *Sanitary Commission*.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *The U. S. Sanitary Commission in the Valley of the Mississippi, During the War*

Stillé, historian of the Sanitary Commission, estimated the value of stores distributed to the army during the war at \$15,000,000, with at least four-fifths of the stores coming from the homes of the North.⁵⁸ The amount of cash received and spent by the Commission in its work was \$5,003,981.76.⁵⁹ The total value of its services has been placed at \$25,000,000.⁶⁰

Outside of the systematized work of members in branch agencies, the Commission utilized several methods to tap the benevolence of the Northern people. It appealed to children for small donations, and for their services as back yard gardeners.⁶¹ It sponsored "Alert Clubs," composed of young people, which raised money through juvenile concerts, tea parties, strawberry festivals, and blackberry pickings. In July the children gave their fireworks money to buy onions for the army.⁶² Not only did the Commission reach out to the youth and to the farmers of the North, but its agents actively participated in food cultivation themselves.⁶³

A private observer commenting on Sherman's Atlanta campaign remarked: "But for its [the Sanitary Commission's] exertions Sherman's army must have perished, after their terrible privation last autumn, from scurvy. They kept up a supply of fresh vegetable food for the men by dint of the most superhuman efforts . . ."⁶⁴

The most important sources from which money flowed to aid the work of the Commission were the Sanitary Fairs. They were begun in the fall of 1863 and were continued throughout the war years. Publicity as well as cash was a notable consequence.⁶⁵

of the Rebellion, 1861-66. Final Report of Dr. J. S. Newberry, Secretary, Western Department (Cleveland: Fairbanks, Benedict & Co., 1871), pp. 205, 217. Hereafter cited as Newberry, *Sanitary Commission*. This work is classified as volume III of the *Documents of the U. S. Sanitary Commission*.

⁵⁸ Stillé, *op. cit.*, pp. 172-3. No statement of the total value of supplies issued by the Commission has been found in the official records and documents.

⁵⁹ Disbursements included (*Commission Financial Report*):

Expenses	369,511.39
Publications	437,684.31
Relief Dept.	939,372.36
Supply Dept.	3,080,245.54
Historical Bureau	82,093.19
Miscellaneous	89,212.82
Cash	5,862.15

\$5,003,981.76

⁶⁰ Emerson D. Fite, *Social and Industrial Conditions in the North During the Civil War* (New York: Macmillan, 1910), p. 227.

⁶¹ "The U. S. Sanitary Commission," *All The Year Round*, XII (December 17, 1864), p. 442.

⁶² *Tribute Book*, p. 87.

⁶³ *Commission Bulletins*, II, #13, p. 398; #19, p. 581; #20, p. 611; III, #28, p. 887.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, II, #24, p. 753.

⁶⁵ See p. 57.

The Peninsula campaign marked the embarkation of the Commission on a program of large scale relief for the sick and wounded in the Army of the Potomac. The tool of relief in this campaign was the hospital transport, a service not used extensively again by the Commission in the East. The Commission requested the quartermaster-general to grant it the use of several steamers which could be rigged up as hospital transports to supplement army conveyances. On April 25, 1862, the first ship, the *Daniel Webster*, was assigned. Olmsted personally took charge of the steamer and on the way down the coast to the York River, directed her refitting as a hospital transport. She reached her destination on April 30, deposited her sanitary stores, and took aboard several hundred sick to be transferred to Northern hospitals.⁶⁶ This itinerary was the general procedure followed by other ships serving the Commission in the campaign.

The most spectacular feature of relief work was that called battlefield relief, in which the sick, wounded, or exhausted soldier at the front became the recipient of Sanitary Commission benevolence, sometimes under fire. The first campaign in which this work was systematized took place in northern Virginia and Maryland, culminating in the clash at Antietam. The system varied from time to time and was enlarged as the war progressed but its basic features remained constant. The relief department, after receiving information from agents in the field, would send wagon trains of supplies to suitable points on the army's line of march. These were intended to take care of the probable needs of the disabled. When a battle began, a sanitary inspector directed the distribution of goods on hand. He also determined as accurately as he was able the additional supplies that would be necessary, and by messenger or telegraph, requisitioned them from the nearest branch. For a larger order, the nearest central depot was notified. Supplies from these depots were then sent as quickly as possible along the most practical routes.⁶⁷

Special wagon trains called "flying depots," first used at Antietam, were attached to most armies. These stayed with the vanguard of the army near the probable line of battle, distributing supplies on the march. When their stores were depleted, they drew from wagons moving a mile or two behind the army. The latter in turn drew from a supply depot, located at Washington for the engagement at Antietam.⁶⁸

Within a week's time the Commission sent to Antietam from Washington 28,763 pieces of dry-goods, shirts, towels, pillows, and similar

⁶⁶ Wormeley, *Sanitary Commission*, p. 63. For a glimpse of Sanitary Commission work during the Peninsula campaign, see K. P. Wormeley, *The Other Side of the War with the Army of the Potomac* . . . (Boston: Ticknor & Co., 1889), p. 44.

⁶⁷ *Succinct Narrative*, pp. 66-8.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, Stillé, *op. cit.*, pp. 265-6.

items; thirty barrels of bandages and old linen; 2,260 pounds of condensed milk and 5,050 pounds of beef-stock and canned meats; three thousand bottles of wine and cordials; and several tons of fruit, crackers, tea, sugar, and hospital accessories.⁶⁹

At Fredericksburg, the benevolence of the Commission accounted for the distribution of eighteen hundred blankets, nine hundred quilts, 5,642 woolen shirts, 4,439 pairs of woolen drawers, 4,269 pairs of socks, and over 2,500 towels.⁷⁰ The battle of Gettysburg cost the Commission in stores, clothing, food, and transportation a total of \$75,000.⁷¹

In the late summer of 1863, the Sanitary Commission established a Field Relief Corps for the Army of the Potomac. To each of the six corps in the latter organization was assigned an agent in charge of an army wagon full of stores. The agent lived with the corps to which he was attached and familiarized himself with its needs. He became "one of the family" and made "common cause with its interests." Sanitary stores were distributed through the army medical officers. A receiving depot was established at Bealton, Virginia, which was supplied three times a week from Washington.⁷² Later regulations prescribed a daily inspection of each wagon or wagon train followed by a written report. All agents were required to be neat in appearance and to set examples of "military precision." Nothing could be sold by the agents to soldiers or anyone employed by the government.⁷³

The relief work of the western branch of the Sanitary Commission, under the general supervision of Dr. J. S. Newberry, was carried on with as much vigor as the activity in the East. The hospital transport, used by government and Commission alike, became a valuable agent of relief in this area because of the proximity of the Mississippi River and its tributaries to many of the battles.

Relief services outside the category of battlefield relief and hospital supply and aid were generally classified as special relief. Divisions of the latter included assistance to the soldier en route to or coming from the field, the collection of back pay and pensions for the discharged soldier, and the maintenance of a hospital directory to facilitate location of any convalescent soldier.

The benevolence tendered the soldier on the move constituted an important segment of special relief. Around Washington, in particular, was this service significant, for in the capital city was a constant massing

⁶⁹ *Commission Documents*, I, #48, p. 1.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, #57, p. 3.

⁷¹ *Commission Bulletins*, I, #8, p. 228.

⁷² *Commission Documents*, II, #72, pp. 1-3.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, #81, pp. 1-3. The Field Relief service of the Commission was later extended to include the Armies of Georgia and Tennessee in the Department of Washington. *Ibid.*, #92, p. 1.

of troops, generally raw recruits. Here the Commission tried to do three things: supply medicine, food, and care to the sick who in the confusion of large scale transportation and because of lack of facilities could not be adequately attended to by their officers; furnish room and board to discharged soldiers who were forced to remain in Washington because of delay in obtaining their papers or pay; and give information and assistance to those displaced soldiers who arrived in Washington seeking their regiments.⁷⁴ What was done in Washington was done to a lesser degree in other areas.

The Commission set up a Soldiers' Home in Washington to fulfill this program. Thirty-nine other homes, performing similar services, were established during the war. In all, they stretched from Washington to Brownsville, Texas, and from Louisville to Port Royal, South Carolina. Over 4,500,000 meals and 1,000,000 night's lodgings were supplied at these homes in addition to other services such as the collection of a large amount of money in soldiers' pay.⁷⁵

The many claims for pensions advanced by the soldiers led the Sanitary Commission to create a separate department to handle this particular feature of special relief. The first local agency was opened in Washington on February 10, 1863. A Central Bureau was organized in Washington on April 1, 1864, under the title "The U. S. Sanitary Commission Army and Navy Claim Agency," which received claims until January 1, 1866. Its operations extended through twenty-four states and the District of Columbia through 108 branch agencies which were supported wholly or in part from the central treasury of the Commission. The total number (including rejections) of claims settled was 52,743, with a cash value of \$9,726,427.83. The cost of this service to the Commission was \$221,028.65.⁷⁶

The endless inquiries about soldiers from relatives and loved ones during the Peninsula campaign led the Commission to establish a hospital directory in Washington in the spring of 1862. As the compilation of names grew, branches were set up in Philadelphia, Louisville, and New York. Agents of the Commission stationed at various points would send in lists of casualties from battlefields. Regular reports were transmitted from every general hospital which included deaths, transfers, and a list of those returning to duty. In this way, the Commission with a good degree of accuracy was able to give the people of the North the much desired information concerning those who fell defending the Union cause.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, I, #35, pp. 1-2.

⁷⁵ Bellows, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-6.

⁷⁶ *Statement Concerning the Army and Navy Claim Agency of the U. S. Sanitary Commission, From September 1, 1861, to October 1, 1866* (NYPL), pp. 1-11.

⁷⁷ Stillé, *op. cit.*, p. 308; Newberry, *Sanitary Commission*, p. 429.

The Sanitary Fairs, held from the fall of 1863 throughout the war, proved the most fertile instrument of fund raising for the Commission. During their operation, they absorbed much of the energy expended by the civilian population for the Union soldier. The fairs largely followed the same pattern from town to town despite the claims of uniqueness advanced by their sponsor. The parades, speeches, sales and exhibits were the same in Burlington, Iowa, as in New York and Chicago, varying only in degree.

From the fairs for which records are available, an approximate total of \$4,392,980.92 was raised.⁷⁸ This figure does not represent the amount of money turned over to Sanitary Commission headquarters and to the national officers nor was all of this money used for Sanitary Commission work. In many cases fairs which raised large cash sums turned over all of the money to the branches of the Commission sponsoring them. In other instances, in case of joint operation with the Christian Commission or an aid society, proceeds were divided, with some of the money going into work other than that of the Sanitary Commission. This is not to imply that there were no benefits derived from such fairs by the national organization. But at times, certain difficulties and misconceptions did arise. Bellows, with his eye on the little-known practice of branches withholding fair money from the central organization, remarked that the public was "building national asylums with the imaginary runnings-over from the full font of the [national] treasury."⁷⁹ The total amount received by the Sanitary Commission treasury was \$2,736,868.84.⁸⁰

In spite of grievances nursed by Commission officials against the fairs, taken as a whole, they proved beneficial both as publicity and as a source of supply in cash and kind. An analysis of the large body of source material on the fairs gives one the impression that they served to draw Northern cities together in a common goal — victory for the Union armies. Starting in the fall of 1863, when the tide had begun to turn militarily for the North, the fairs launched a tremendous wave of enthusiasm for "the cause" — pocket books, though pinched by two years of war, were opened again, arms folded in an attitude of peace without victory were unclasped to work for the soldiers. This nation-wide surge of vitality and common trust did not slacken materially until Lee surrendered at Appomattox.

Some attempt was made by the Commission in the early part of the war to ameliorate the conditions of Southern prisoners of war in Northern

⁷⁸ This figure has been compiled from various sources, chief of which is the Sanitary Commission Archives.

⁷⁹ *Tribute Book*, p. 97.

⁸⁰ *Commission Financial Report*.

prisons. Concerning the questioned wisdom of such a policy, Olmsted stated:

... It may be well to say that the Commission proceeds upon the ground that every rebel whose life is saved will increase the inducements presented to the rebel authorities to treat carefully all Union men who fall into their hands. Every Union man whose life is saved by them buys back to them a man of their own, whose life we have saved.⁸¹

Considering its low regard for Southern troops, it might be added that the Commission, as far as its inspection of Northern prisons was concerned, was like the good housewife who hates dirt no matter in whose house she finds it.⁸²

In addition to those of the enemy in regular military prisons, the benevolent mantle of the Sanitary Commission extended to two other classes under the Confederate flag: soldiers recently fallen on the battlefield or in temporary places of confinement and civilians feeling the pinch of war. Here, as in other phases of the Commission's work bearing on aid to the enemy, there was no uniformity of opinion or concrete policy on just how far the other cheek should be turned. Indeed, at times the principle of *lex talionis* seemed uppermost in the minds of some members of the Commission.

On April 3, 1865, Union troops occupied Richmond. Along with the invaders came two agents of mercy under the red banner of the United States Sanitary Commission. They found five thousand sick and wounded Confederate soldiers and the Confederate hospital in dire need of many things. As far as was in their power, they mitigated suffering in the gray ranks. The families of the poor were also looked after. Charity did not weaken allegiances, however. The attitude of the inhabitants of Richmond continued to be "Virginia first — Virginia last, and Virginia forever."⁸³ A general rule was established which made the distribution of goods for the sick contingent on the recommendation of a "relief committee" and trusted pastors of the local churches. In addition, a person had to be actually suffering and not able to get supplies elsewhere.⁸⁴

A letter from a West Cambridge, Massachusetts, clergyman to Bel-
lows, describing the distribution of Commission goods at Richmond, served to check and water down this benevolent activity. The minister related that he had called at the Commission office in the city and had

⁸¹ F. L. Olmsted to R. M. Lewis, Philadelphia, July 30, 1863 (SCA, #613, CU).

⁸² For the activities of the Commission relating to Northern prisons, see William Y. Thompson, "Organization, Supply, and Relief in the United States Sanitary Commission," (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1953), pp. 159-70.

⁸³ Joseph Parrish to J. F. Jenkins, Richmond, April 15, 1865 (SCA, #805, CU).

⁸⁴ Alexander McDonald to J. F. Jenkins, Richmond, April 25, 1865 (SCA, #806, CU).

seen agents giving stores to the population of the Confederate capital, "women, negroes, some in Confederate uniforms . . ." Since the Federal government was already ministering to the needy in the form of thousands of rations per day, he asked if there might not be a bad reaction in the North. He said that his own congregation would not like it. "It is not that they are unwilling to feed the *Starving* rebels, — but what they give *expressly* to our *Soldiers*, they want to go to *them*."⁸⁵

It was an irate Bellows who dictated policy from above to two of his lieutenants. To Dr. Alexander McDonald he wrote: "I understand our agents are [*sic*] Richmond are giving way our Sanitary Stores right and left . . . to sick & well, soldiers & civilians, rebels & Union men! This will not do & it is expressly forbidden! We must confine ourselves to our own work."⁸⁶ Tersely, and, perhaps, thoughtlessly, he stated to Jenkins: "In the changed humor of the Nation [the turmoil after Lincoln's assassination], it will not answer for us to be helping the Rebels to live."⁸⁷ Down the chain of command came the following directive: "Commission resolves not to issue supplies to citizens of rebel towns, except in cases of absolute necessity, and then only to loyal citizens."⁸⁸

The efforts of the Commission on behalf of Confederate prisoners and other Southerners constituted only a minor portion of its work. Bellows and his associates apparently were willing to share with those considered traitors as long as this did not interfere with the regularly constituted goal of caring for Union soldiers.

The Sanitary Commission did not extend itself on behalf of Union prisoners until the fall of 1863, although some stores bearing its name were sent to them by the branches.⁸⁹ It felt that the wants of prisoners could be adequately met by the government. Furthermore, letters received during this period revealed that the areas of suffering were not particularly within the jurisdiction or reach of Commission activity.⁹⁰

The supplies sent through the lines by the Commission after the summer of 1863 became of paramount importance for at that time the cartel, or system for the exchange of prisoners, came to an end. The cartel had become enmeshed in the question of the status of the Confederacy, negro soldiers, and mutual charges of ill-treatment toward prisoners. When exchange ceased and overcrowded prisons resulted, the

⁸⁵ Samuel A. Smith to H. W. Bellows, Norfolk, April (dated September) 25, 1865 (SCA, #710).

⁸⁶ H. W. Bellows to Alexander McDonald, April 26, 1865 (SCA, #710).

⁸⁷ H. W. Bellows to J. F. Jenkins, April 27, 1865 (SCA, #710).

⁸⁸ J. F. Jenkins to Captain Isaac Harris, Washington, April 26, 1865 (SCA, #838).

⁸⁹ Lt. Charles M. Hooper to John H. Towne, Richmond Military Prison, January 13, 1862 (SCA, #590, CU).

⁹⁰ A. J. Bloor to Ellen Collins, Washington, December 30, 1861 (SCA, #833).

rations furnished prisoners in Richmond, the center of the Southern prison system, decreased in quality and quantity.⁹¹

The Commission attempted to formulate a definite policy for supplying Union prisoners. It sought to avoid transmitting packages of food and clothing to specified individuals, distributing instead to those who needed supplies most. Had separate gifts been allowed, the Commission's channel of relief, "somewhat limited by Confederate authorities," would have been choked.⁹² The distribution of supplies was generally done by a Confederate officer at the prisons. The Commission and the government would have preferred one of their own representatives to perform this task but usually such was not permitted.

On December 11, 1863, the Confederates cut off the supply of goods to Union prisoners from their government and other sources. Confederate Commissioner of Exchange, Robert Ould, wrote General S. A. Meredith, who held a similar position on the Union side, as follows:

As the assent of the Confederate Government to the transmission by your authorities and people of food and clothing to the prisoners at Richmond and elsewhere has been the subject of so much misconception and misrepresentation, and has been made the occasion of so much vilification and abuse, I am directed to inform you that no more will be allowed to be delivered at City Point. The clothing and provisions already received will be devoted to the use of your prisoners. When that supply is exhausted they will receive the same rations as our soldiers in the field.⁹³

This ban continued until the summer of 1864, a period of about six months. The Commission itself had something to do with the stoppage. Lewis H. Steiner, Commission worker, remarked that he presumed the "whole [thing] results from our own correspondence in writing so largely on the subject. We will learn some of these days."⁹⁴ No doubt having some bearing on the matter, also, was the fact that boxes of stores passing through Commission hands were sometimes marked "For our starving Prisoners at Richmond," a sentiment not relished by Confederates. When this practice was discovered, agents were instructed not to forward items so designated, but the damage had already been done.⁹⁵

Even though goods from the federal government and Northern civilian organizations were not permitted entrance into Confederate lines, it seemed that "supplies for individuals from their homes . . . [could] pass

⁹¹ William B. Hesseltine, *Civil War Prisons* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1930), p. 115.

⁹² *Commission Bulletins*, I, #2, p. 48; J. F. Jenkins to H. W. Bellows, November 11, 1863 (SCA, #837).

⁹³ *O.R.*, II, 6, p. 686.

⁹⁴ L. H. Steiner to James Gall, Washington, December 14, 1863 (SCA, #840).

⁹⁵ F. N. Knapp to J. F. Jenkins, February 23, 1864 (SCA, #841); L. H. Steiner to David S. Pope, Washington, March 10, 1864 (SCA, #840).

through the U. S. authorities at Fortress Monroe."⁹⁶ The Sanitary Commission was able to take advantage of this loophole and continue their supply in a limited manner. Names of soldiers in want and their requests were obtained through letters written from Libby Prison in Richmond to the Commission. Packages were then addressed to them individually. Detailed instructions were laid down regarding the preparation of boxes for the prisoners:

... You [those in charge of stores] will endeavor to make them look as 'homelike' as possible. They should be of different sizes, each containing a variety of stores such as a family would be likely to send to a father or brother in prison. Of course no two boxes should be alike in contents, & nothing bearing the mark of the Commission & the stamp of its branches should be sent.⁹⁷

In July, 1864, according to M. M. Marsh, Commission agent, the Confederate authorities permitted the Commission to send to individual prisoners "clothing and the coarser articles of food." Transportation facilities of the Confederates, however, were limited. From July to August 18, supplies were sent to individuals who distributed them at their discretion and returned receipts for the same through Confederate officers.⁹⁸

In the latter part of August negotiations for a regular system of intercourse were begun. The impetus for this came from the alleged conditions of Union prisoners at the Andersonville, Georgia, camp, a synonym in the Northern mind for starvation and barbarity of treatment. So widely circulated were the tales of suffering that Union General J. G. Foster, on August 21, wrote General Sam Jones, commanding Confederate forces in South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, requesting that supplies be allowed to pass through to Andersonville. Permission was granted and on September 23 private boxes of stores, Commission goods, and a sum of money were forwarded by Foster. Flag of truce boats meeting in the outer harbor at Charleston handled the operation.⁹⁹ Other goods were shipped under the same arrangements with the Commission being satisfied that a very large percent of its supplies reached the prisoners. "The gentlemanly demeanor of these [Confederate] officials," reported one Commission agent, "has, if possible, increased our anxiety that peace may soon allow us to meet them as citizens of a common government."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ A. J. Bloor to Ellen Collins, February 11, 1864 (SCA, #841).

⁹⁷ William A. Hovey to J. T. Pancoast, February 26, 1864 (SCA, #841); Francis Fowler to J. T. Pancoast, February 22, 1864 (SCA, #836).

⁹⁸ *Commission Bulletins*, III, #27, p. 853.

⁹⁹ *O.R.*, I, 25, 2, pp. 286-7; II, 7, pp. 663, 848, 875.

¹⁰⁰ *Commission Bulletins*, III, #25, p. 785.

On October 6, Ould himself instigated negotiations with Union officials on the subject of prisoner supply, proposing a mutual exchange of goods and receipting for the same by the senior officer at the prison camp.¹⁰¹ Final arrangements on October 19, agreed to by Generals Grant and Lee, saw the incorporation of most of Ould's suggestions.¹⁰²

Records do not reveal any sustained shipment of Commission goods to Union prisoners in 1865. Instead, concentration was directed toward caring for soldiers coming home through a policy of even exchange agreed to by Grant and Confederate authorities in January, 1865.

In the East, the Commission maintained agents and supplies at points of return for ex-prisoners. A regular supply depot was established at Annapolis to minister to those soldiers who became patients of the general hospital. At "Camp Parole" near Annapolis, where prisoners were quartered until exchanged, the Commission as a rule had two agents and a large stock of goods. Wilmington, North Carolina, also was the scene of constant Commission activity. Then, too, workers under the Sanitary banner were found on flag of truce boats plying between City Point and Annapolis, a trip of some twelve hours.¹⁰³ In the Western theater of war, comparable work was done by the Commission.¹⁰⁴

It is difficult to measure accurately the value of the aid rendered by the Sanitary Commission to prisoners of war and ex-prisoners. One can add up in dollars and cents the cost of supplies sent and one can find evidence of appreciation in contemporary books, but unrecorded would be the testimony of many who never took up their pens to write. To those receiving them, Sanitary Commission gifts no doubt served to some extent as an antidote for a militarized routine and generally miserable existence. For in addition to the goods designed to save lives, there were those of an intimate, unmilitary nature which helped introduce some color and cheerfulness into a drab prison life.

As the smoke of battle lifted and the armies disintegrated, the bulk of the work of the United States Sanitary Commission ended. The framework of humanitarian endeavor, expanded to tremendous proportions by total war, contracted to a few routine jobs, humdrum to all but those who benefited from them. The North was anxious to forget the privations of the past four years and enjoy the fruits of a hard-won victory. The story of the Sanitary Commission did not get a prominent place in

¹⁰¹ O.R., II, 7, p. 926.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 1008-10.

¹⁰³ W. A. Hovey to John W. Wilson, Washington, March 24, 1864 (SCA, #841); Joseph Parrish to F. N. Knapp, January 6, 1864 (SCA, #775, CU).

¹⁰⁴ *Commission Bulletins*, III, #28, p. 888; *Ibid.*, #32, p. 1002; #34, p. 1058; *Sanitary Reporter*, II, #23, April 15, 1865, pp. 180-1, 190; George A. Blake to J. F. Jenkins, New Orleans, October 28, 1864 (SCA, #635, CU).

the great mass of secondary literature coming out of the Civil War. Soldiers and politicians shared the center of attention while workers in benevolent societies were relegated to bit parts. This did not necessarily mean that the Sanitary Commission played an unimportant and thankless role in the conflict. Readers simply preferred hearing stories of stirring military and political deeds rather than the more prosaic accounts of supply gathering and sanitary improvement.

From various sources, the value and significance of the Sanitary Commission can be pieced together — documentary material, correspondence, and personal testimony from individuals and groups. One arrives at the conclusion that the Civil War might have been won by Northern arms without the Commission's endeavors. But it is quite evident that victory was made easier through its services.

MARKED GOODS

SOME OF THE MARKS WHICH ARE fastened on the blankets, shirts, *etc.*, sent to the Sanitary Commission for the soldiers, show the thought and feeling at home. Thus — on a home-spun blanket, worn but washed as clean as snow, was pinned a bit of paper which said: "This blanket was carried by Milly Aldrich (who is ninety-three years old) down hill and up hill one and a half miles, to be given to some soldier."

On a bed-quilt was pinned a card, saying: "My son is in the army. Whoever is made warm by this quilt, which I have worked on for six days and most all of six nights, let him remember his own mother's love."

On another blanket was this: "This blanket was used by a soldier in the war of 1812 — may it keep some soldier warm in this war against traitors."

On a pillow was written: "This pillow belonged to my little boy, who died resting on it; it is a precious treasure to me, but I give it for the soldiers."

On a pair of woolen socks was written: "These stockings were knit by a little girl five years old, and she is going to knit some more, for mother says it will help some poor soldier."

On a box of beautiful lint was this mark: "Made in a sick-room, where the sunlight has not entered for nine years, but where God has entered, and where two sons have bid their mother good-bye as they have gone out to the war."

On a bundle containing bandages was written: "This is a poor gift, but it is all I had; I have given my husband and my boy, and only wish I had more to give, but I haven't."

On some eye-shades was marked: "Made by one who is blind. Oh! how I long to see the *dear Old Flag* that you are all fighting under!"

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Field and Siege Pieces *

FAIRFAX DOWNEY

HEAVY ARTILLERYMEN MANNED THE BIG GUNS in the defenses of Washington and the coastal forts north to Maine where it was deemed necessary in 1861 to build granite Fort Popham to protect the Kennebec River against Confederate Navy raiders. Those gunners missed the lively action seen by their Southern counterparts in the batteries of Gulf and Atlantic ports into which swift steamers ran their invaluable cargoes through the Union blockade. Yet the Federal heavies came into their own at Vicksburg. There the fire of their mortars, up to 13-inchers, 10-inch Columbiads, and 32- and 42-pounders, many borrowed from the Navy, was terrific in volume and effect. They counterbattered large-caliber pieces in the Vicksburg works such as "Whistling Dick," so called from the sound made by its projectiles in flight, and paved the way for the storming of the stronghold, long and stubbornly defended by General John Pemberton. When General Grant's assault columns and Admiral Porter's gunboats finally reduced the town on the high bluff July 4, 1863, and opened the Mississippi, 30,600 men, 172 cannon, and 60,000 stands of arms were surrendered.

In the attack on Charleston, South Carolina, later that month Union crews fired a mighty 300-pound Parrot whose shells all but demolished Fort Sumter. Artillery companies achieved a notable engineering feat when they put a second big rifle, a 200-pounder (8-inch), into position to fire into the city at a range of five miles. Two and a half miles of railroad track were laid through the marshes, and a pine log platform built on piling. There "The Swamp Angel," as her crew christened her, was emplaced, barricaded by 13,000 sandbags. Twenty-pound powder charges

* A chapter from Mr. Downey's new book *Sound of the Guns*, which will be published by David McKay Co. this fall. *Civil War History* is indebted to Mr. Downey for allowing this chapter to appear prior to its publication in *Sound of the Guns*.

flung her shells, some of them incendiary, into Charleston where an uproar of bells and whistles, followed by indignant protests against "barbarity," acknowledged hits. Though "The Swamp Angel" was disabled by the premature explosion of her thirty-sixth round, she had fulfilled her mission by damaging morale and drawing considerable enemy fire. Charleston, however, held out despite the capture of Battery Wagner and the shattering of Sumter.

Elsewhere heavy artillerymen were embittered by inglorious inactivity. Train guard and camp fatigue at Gettysburg were at least field duty, but most unwelcome to the 1st Maine Heavy Artillery, among others, was the soft detail to the Washington forts. Only the "coffee-coolers" in the battery were content with the luxury of three square meals a day, good beds, and nothing to do but parade and stand to at silent guns. Most of the officers and the rank and file chafed under it. They had not "listed to get kilt," but they had joined up to fight and risk it. For months they fretted, sulked and cursed their lot. Like other heavies, the men of the 1st Maine cheered when they were finally ordered to the front where they took a tough ribbing, as they marched up in their neat, fresh uniforms, some with two knapsacks strapped to their backs.

"Brought your trunks along?" combat troops jibed at them. "Got a full supply of paper collars? There's plenty of fortifications for you boys to man yonder in the brush."

While the heavies, brass shoulder-plates gleaming, marched singing behind their bands, light artillerymen joined the foot troops in taunting them. "Why, dearest, did you leave your earthworks behind you?" Wounded showed them bloody gashes, shattered limbs, and dead men lying in the fence corners and called out derisively: "That's what you will catch up yonder in the woods!" Blanked, sober-faced, the heavies, armed as infantry, marched on into battle.

Soon the men from the forts made the scoffers swallow their sneers. "They fought with a steadiness and determination that could not be excelled," a light gunner, who had himself pitched in with a rifle, acknowledged. "The whole army honored them." The Maine battery went in at Spotsylvania 147 strong; after a month of fighting only seven answered roll call. Recruited back up to a strength of 900, in a charge at Petersburg it took the most severe losses of any regiment in a single engagement of the entire war—632 killed and wounded in less than half an hour. In the Wilderness, at Spotsylvania, and at Cold Harbor the 6th, 7th, and 15th New York Heavy Artillery also proved their fighting quality and suffered considerable casualties. True enough they manned fortifications but those were Rebel earthworks, taken at the bayonet point.

The Wilderness, old battleground of Chancellorsville, held grim memories for the Army of the Potomac, but Lee maneuvered Grant into facing him there (May 5-7, 1864), as he had Hooker. Gruesome testimony for

new troops dotted the fields and clearings: thousands of bleached skulls and bones of the hastily buried.

There was savage in-fighting again over thousands of acres of tangled scrub forest and interlaced underbrush, a North American version of the Philippine canebrakes and Burma jungles descendants of these troops in blue or gray would encounter in wars to come—country difficult for infantry but far worse for cavalry and artillery. General Grant, believing he had more cannon than could be effectively employed on such terrain, made a decision in accordance with general practice under the circumstances. "Artillery is a very burdensome luxury where it cannot be used," he wrote. "Before leaving Spotsylvania, therefore, I sent back to the defense of Washington over 100 pieces of artillery, with the horses and caissons. This relieved the road over which we were to march of more than 200 six-horse teams, and still left us more artillery than could be advantageously used."

Furthermore, he reduced the pieces of batteries he kept from six to four, and his guns on hand were not wholly utilized, either in the Wilderness or in the two following conflicts. "Fewer were engaged in any one battle than remained idle, and this in spite of Hunt with his skill and ability." U. S. Grant, who had manhandled a mountain howitzer up into a belfry to rake the streets of Mexico City, neither showed nor encouraged such artillery enterprise in the Virginia woods. It was the Southerners who carried on the tradition of Louisbourg, Trenton, and Cerro Gordo. James Warner Bellah voiced it in *The Valiant Virginians*: "Never say a cliff's inaccessible; just say difficult for horse artillery." Gunners in gray forced their Napoleons and rifled pieces through choked trails and up hills bristling with trees and brush. They brought them into action where they were most needed, as in the instance of Colonel William T. Poague's great stand, first with a single gun, then with his entire battalion, to beat back a Federal charge.

In sullen frustration the Army of the Potomac recoiled from a stricken field of blazing brush where, flames driving back attempts at rescue, hundreds of wounded burned to death. Grant marched by the flank, threatening Richmond. Lee, side-slipping, confronted him at Spotsylvania Court House. Again they fought in wooded country, but here trees were larger; mighty oaks, twenty-two inches thick, were hewn down by bullets of the furious fusilades around the Bloody Angle. Once Union troops were close to victory, for Rebel divisional artillery in that salient had been withdrawn by night on Lee's order to prepare for a sudden movement planned for the next day. Hancock's surprise attack through a dawn fog bit into the Angle—caught enemy batteries in column hastening back into position—swept over them and captured twenty guns. But the Gray infantry rallied, was reinforced and held.

Spotsylvania cost Grant 17,000 casualties, Lee only 8,000. Among the

fallen was Lieutenant Thomas Goodman, a replacement in Battery "B," 4th U.S. Artillery, who met a death as appropriate to an artilleryman as that of a cavalryman killed in a galloping charge. While directing the fire of his section, shrapnel burst above him, and a ball drove the crossed cannon insignia on his cap into his head, inflicting a mortal wound. Not long afterwards another unusual incident occurred when the Richmond Howitzers began shelling a house sheltering Yankee sharpshooters. Two women, one carrying a baby and leading a child, emerged from the building. Adjutant Stiles of the Howitzers rushed forward and hurried them back to his lines, taking the infant from its mother's arms. As he passed his battery, he halted to order firing resumed and remained to conduct it. The baby, cooing and enjoying the racket, pulled at his beard, and Stiles had almost forgotten his burden when a laughing cannoneer called his attention to it, and he left the guns to return the little artilleryman to his mother.

Marching and maneuvering, clashing in battle, the generals played their deadly chess, with Richmond as the prize. Grant, the Charles Martel of his day, hammered away, suffering heavy losses the North could endure, exacting a lesser toll the South could not afford. At Cold Harbor, June 3, 1864, he lost 5,600 men in a futile frontal assault on entrenchments, mostly from the deadly crossfire of Alexander's cannon. Meanwhile there took place two stirring artillery actions: a rearguard fight and a charge. While they were only moves by pawns in the game of grand tactics and strategy, they upheld the highest tenets of the gunners' arm.

At the Battle of New Market, May 15, 1864, where the young cadets of Virginia Military Institute made their valiant assault, Federal General Franz Sigel's line was broken. Part of his army fled in rout along the Valley Pike. Rebel regiments pressing forward to catch the disorganized mass jammed in the bottleneck of a stone bridge across the Shenandoah River. With nothing barring the pursuit, heavy casualties and captures appeared inevitable.

First Lieutenant Henry A. Du Pont, graduated at the head of his class at West Point in '61, commanded Battery "B," 5th U.S. Artillery, in reserve that afternoon. In the sultry heat he had unharnessed and watered his thirsty teams, then harnessed, hitched and was standing by. When the blue ranks gave way in disorder and confusion, orders sent the battery galloping to the front. Du Pont, disregarding contradictory directions from excited staff officers, took matters in his own hands and posted his guns. He stationed them in three platoons of two pieces each, under his lieutenants and first sergeant, in echelon—at intervals—along the turnpike. They held a comparatively narrow defile, their right flank protected by the Shenandoah curving down toward the bridge, their left by Smith's Creek.

As Du Pont's forward pair of guns took position and were prepared for

action, he poured their fire into the low-lying haze of battle smoke that marked the advancing enemy. The crimson flare of bursting shells rent the white curtain and rocked back the pursuit in sudden check. While the scattered column rallied on a crest and waited for reinforcement, one of its officers watched with admiration the smooth precision and accurate firing of the gun crews below; he would remember and praise them when he met Du Pont by chance years later.

The advance regained momentum, red rifle streaks stabbing downward. "B" Battery's first platoon limbered and galloped back to a post in rear of the third. Its second took over the defense, Du Pont directing its gun laying until it, too, was forced to retire. Now it was the third's turn, then the first again. Successively each platoon with beautifully adjusted fire built a barrier of exploding shrapnel in front of the oncoming infantry and brought to a standstill two light batteries, four guns of horse artillery, and two pieces of the Cadet battery, which had been rushed forward to bombard the mass at the bridge. Balked in that objective, they concentrated on the Yankee gunners but failed to hit the fleeting target of the rapidly shifting platoons. For four hours Du Pont's Battery single-handed, without a vestige of support, held the pass, a Virginia Thermopylae. At dusk it retreated over the Shenandoah span, destroyed it and rejoined the army it had saved.

The bravery of Lieutenant Du Pont and his men was not the prime feature of that memorable rearguard combat. "Courageous action is expected of a battery commander." Later at Cedar Creek he would be awarded a Medal of Honor for individual heroism. Most notable were his quick decision, ability to estimate situation and terrain, initiative, and judgment in risking only two guns at a time. Displaying those qualities, he had fulfilled artillery missions specified by General Hunt: "... to protect the movement of our own troops, and to hinder those of the enemy ... to cover our own retreat."

Another Battery "B," that of the 4th U.S. Artillery, veteran of Antietam and Gettysburg, made the gallant charge at Bethesda Church June 2, 1864.

General Charles Griffin, who had fought so splendidly at First Bull Run as an artillery captain, watched a Rebel battery wheel into position in a clearing and open fire on his infantry. He beckoned to Stewart, "B's" commander. The latter, turning his horse to ride over, called out to his men waiting beside their pieces in column.

"This means us, boys. Drivers, mount! Cannoneers, mount! Attention!"

Griffin asked: "James, can you go into battery under that fire?"

"Yes, sir. Where shall I unlimber?"

"Suit yourself about that, but keep an eye on your supports. I would like to see that battery silenced."

"I will shut it up, sir."

A choice of two positions confronted Stewart. One near the church would necessitate firing over his own infantrymen at a range of half a mile. The second demanded a dash right up into the skirmish line and going into action a matter of hundreds of feet from the muzzles of the enemy guns. Stewart never hesitated. He spurred back to the head of his column, drew his saber, flourished it in a moulinet and shouted:

"Forward, ho! Trot! Gallop!"

Straight down the pike toward the front line the battery thundered. Swishing case and canister cut into its dust cloud. Stewart, five or six yards ahead, roared back through the tumult: "Come on, boys! Follow me! Charge!!!" There was no such command in the light artillery manual, but they knew what it meant. They charged, every driver low over his horse's neck, whipping and yelling—every cannoneer clinging desperately to guard-rods of limber chests and bouncing six inches high as wheels hit ruts.

Slow up now. Yonder lay the ground. "The Old Man" volleyed orders. "Action front! Right section load solid shot and case alternately. No. 1 gun, left section, load common shell. Cut fuses one second. 'Old Bess' (that was the left gun), give 'em double canister. Fire by piece! Sock it to 'em!" Veteran crews handled their 12-pounder Napoleons like horse-pistols. Skirmishers on both flanks cheered the blazing cannon, and the crackle of their musketry redoubled.

The battery, unscathed by shelling on the road, began to suffer. Eleven men dropped during the first minute of unlimbering and loading. The toll rose to fourteen and a dozen horses, but powder-blackened survivors served the guns fast. Though enveloped in dense smoke, they had the direction, marked by the track of wheels in recoil, and the range, 1,200 feet, had been estimated perfectly. In three minutes they felt the enemy's fire slacken. Eight or ten more, and it ceased entirely. Lifting of the smoke cloud revealed the Rebel battery standing dismantled and deserted, bodies strewn about the pieces. Captain Stewart, his promise to shut them up kept, begged the General to be allowed to capture them. "If you will advance your skirmish line to cover me," he said, "by God I'll take some of my teams and haul them in myself with my men." Griffin refused, since no general forward movement had been ordered, and the cost in lives would have been heavy. Under cover of night the battered guns were withdrawn. But "B" of the 4th had added another battle honor to the long list begun at Buena Vista.

Transported by waterways, a siege train of 188 pieces converged on Petersburg, Virginia, as Grant drove toward Richmond from the south in the summer of 1864. Sturdy, hard-hitting 4½-inch Rodmans, 6-inch howitzers, 100-pounder Parrots. An array of mortars presided over by a 13-

inch, 17,000-pound monster, which would be mounted on a railroad flat car; the thunderous flight and tremendous impact of its 200-pound projectiles, fired at a range of two and one-half miles, would win it the name of "The Dictator" or "Petersburg Express." With each big gun traveled 1,000 rounds of ammunition—200 for a mortar—spare carriages, sling carts, battery wagons, forges. Landed, reserve artillery and quartermaster teams hauled them into position where they replaced field pieces.

It was "shovel and shoot" now for artillerymen, with the long, hard labor of the former a prerequisite. Along ten miles of breastworks emplacements for fifty-five batteries were constructed. Classic terms for fortifications revived, as troops toiled to make gabions (wicker frames filled with earth), the rows of sharpened stakes called fraises, or *chevaux de frise*, the interlaced branches of an abatis, mantelets of coiled rope, timbered palisades, barricades of thousands of sandbags, shelters known as bombproofs. Back of the lines ammunition, rations, forage, and all sorts of war materials (to be envied by hungry, short-supplied Confederates) heaped high. Huts, corrals, bakeries, even a steepled church were built. Signal towers rose, invaluable to Union gunners as observation posts.

Southerners paralleled the long lines of entrenchments and emplacements. The months-long siege of Petersburg, junction of strategic railways and gateway to Richmond, began as Grant's assaults were flung back, and he concluded he could not storm the enemy's works until the defense was worn down.

Sound of the guns day and night. Twenty-four soaring mortar bombs in the air at one time could often be counted. Through the roar of cannon cut the sharp *ping* of sharpshooters' bullets, dropping members of working parties, drilling men between the eyes who rashly exposed themselves in gaps or embrasures. Grandsons of these soldiers would see just such grim service in the trenches of France. In July Grant resorted to that expedient of a stubborn siege, a mining operation. Coal miners of the 48th Pennsylvania dug, timbered and ventilated a tunnel which extended 586 feet to a point beneath a battery in a Confederate salient. They charged it with four tons of black powder and spliced two fuses in a 98-foot line to the magazine.

While four divisions were mustered to burst through the great aperture the explosion would tear, artillery spotters in the towers plotted the location of nearly every gun in the Rebel batteries. Eighty-one heavy cannon and mortars were laid on them, along with as many fieldpieces brought forward for a mighty bombardment to cover the assault. But observers had overlooked a 16-gun battalion in a sunken road, which was under strict orders from General Alexander to remain silent, its cannon-eers to lie low. The muffled noises of Federal tunneling had been

reported, and though countermines had been started, the able artillery chief had determined with foresight that would prove invaluable to hold the strategically-placed battalion in reserve for an emergency.

Early in the morning of July 31st the mine's fuse, timed to burn fifteen minutes, was lit. Those tense minutes passed, ticked on into an hour. Assault troops with fixed bayonets, gunners with lanyards taut, waited in suspense for the eruption. The enemy breastworks still stood, solid and forbidding. Then two supremely courageous soldiers, Lieutenant Jacob Douty and Sergeant Henry Rees of the 48th Pennsylvania, crawled into the tunnel—groped along its utter blackness—found the fused burned out at the splice. They relighted it and scrambled back to safety.

Eleven minutes, and the ground heaved up in volcanic fury. The awesome spectacle of the explosion burned itself into the memory of every witness. A Confederate artillery captain, William Gordon McCabe, thus vividly described it.

A slight tremor of the earth for a second, then the rocking as of an earthquake, and with a tremendous burst which rent the sleeping hills beyond, a vast column of earth and smoke shoots upward to a great height, its dark sides flashing out sparks of fire, hangs poised for a moment in mid-air, and then hurtling downward with a roaring sound, showers of stone, broken timbers and blackened human limbs, subsides — the gloomy pall of darkening smoke flushing to an angry crimson as it floats away to meet the morning sun.

At least 278 men were killed or wounded. Two guns of the salient's battery were flung high into the air. In the defense lines gaped a crater 170 feet long, 60 to 80 feet wide, 30 deep.

A crashing cannonade caught up the echoes of the blast, sustained and carried them on in a continuous roar. Blue regiments rushed forward, down into the fuming breach. Few were destined to charge on up its slope. At the right, left and rear of the yawning gap Gray riflemen rallied. For moments no artillery seconded them, since Union counterbattery was smothering opposition all along the front. Several guns close to the crater stood deserted, ordered abandoned by their young commander, his nerve broken by the explosion. Field officers manned them, poured their fire downward. Now Alexander's hidden battalion in the sunken road opened with deadly effect, beating back reinforcements for troops in the crater. Vainly General Hunt's big mortars searched for it to silence it. Its sixteen guns under Colonel John C. Haskell flamed on in furious action. Sharpshooters, whittling down their crews, forced all but six to pull back. That half dozen, all served by volunteers, stood fast; their "cannoneers labored at their pieces like fiends." Now Haskell brought forward two mortar detachments and their weapons, so close to the chasm that charges of a few ounces of powder were sufficient to hurl their shells in arcs that dropped them into the huddled masses in the bloody excava-

tion. While the leader of one of the storm divisions cowered in a bomb-proof, rifles and cannon of the defense turned the crater into an abattoir. The cost of the "miserable failure," as Grant styled it, was 5,000 killed, wounded and captured.

U. S. Grant hammered on, striking at flanks, cutting the railroads, but Petersburg held out through a winter of stalemate. In the spring of '65 Lee assaulted Fort Stedman, took it, then lost it, his final attack shattered by the massed fire of the guns of Tidball's brigade. Petersburg fell at last. Listening to the final shots, a Confederate major of artillery, risen from the ranks, read with his surviving men "The Soldier's Psalm," the Ninety-first. "Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night . . . nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday." On through Richmond retreated the Army of Northern Virginia, exodus lighted by burning warehouses, supply depots, and bridges. It was near the end.

Battling in the Valley, in the West, in the South. Sherman driving through to Atlanta and the sea, marching north and cutting a swath of devastation. Sheridan's cavalry, horse and field artillery, and infantry closing the cordon. A harvest of Gray cannon at Five Forks. Grant taking the surrender of Lee and his army at Appomattox Court House April 9, 1865.

A number of Confederate batteries had escaped the encirclement. Some destroyed their guns, others buried theirs by the roadside. Many artillery horses, claimed by officers and men, were allowed to be kept under Grant's generous terms. Sixty-three guns of General Alexander's, their caissons, and exhausted, starving teams stood in a mile-long column at Appomattox, a melancholy symbol of defeat.

For the Army of the Potomac* in May, 1865, and for Sherman's Army of the West in June came days of glory: the grand reviews in Washington.

* In "The Roaring Guns from the Seven Days to Cold Harbor," *Field Artillery Journal* (Jan.-Feb., 1936), Col. Allen J. Greer, Field Artillery, sums up the methods of employment of the artilleries of the Army of the Potomac and that of the Northern Virginia as follows:

"1. At all times the Army of the Potomac had a decisive superiority in numbers of guns, in their calibers, and in the quantity and quality of ammunition. This superiority tended to produce a result that Napoleon mentions, namely: That infantry having to fight long with superior artillery against them would be disorganized.

"2. Superiority in numbers and calibers had a direct effect upon the tactical employment of the two artilleries.

"3. Wherever there was sufficient space to put their batteries in position and there was a good field of fire, the Union artillery's fire was massed and dominated that of the Confederates.

"4. On those occasions when the artilleries of both sides could be employed in large masses, the great superiority of Hunt, the Union chief of Artillery, over the Confederate chief, in leadership tactical ability, and skill in coordination of fire, was an important element in deciding the battle.

"5. Probably the most effective employment of the Confederate artillery, was at Fredericksburg, where the great majority of the guns made no attempt to engage the

Pennsylvania Avenue from the Capitol to the White House echoed to the blare of bands and flourishes of massed bugles, tread of marching feet, clatter of hoofs and rumble of wheels, the cheers of spectators. Grief watched with Triumph. Eyes dimmed with tears for the many fallen in battle, for Abraham Lincoln, dead of an assassin's bullet. The long blue column, tattered banners flaunting, streamed down the avenue. Headquarters, the cavalry corps, the provost marshal's brigade, engineers with lumbering pontoons, regiment on regiment of veteran infantry, ambulances, artillery with cannon burnished and horse hides and harness gleaming.

An infantry officer in the reviewing stand recognized passing batteries. Those were guns which had valiantly supported his regiment at Gettysburg. In surging memory he heard their cannonade once more above the cheers of the crowd and paid them tribute. "Roar on, ye throngs around and far away; there are voices in my ear out-thundering yours!"

Union artillery, but remained under cover until the opposing infantry launched its assault, then came into position and at close ranges poured withering fire on the attackers.

"6. While both artilleries had more or less the same doctrines and tactical methods, still the conditions of the two forces brought out two distinct phases in the employment of artillery, quite different in character, although not always so considered.

"The Union artillery with its greater proportion of rifles, outnumbering and out-ranging its opponents, illustrates primarily the massing of batteries under common control, furnishing the army commander with a great reserve of fire power, with which he can neutralize the opposing guns and place destructive fire on his infantry. Such use of massed artillery practically decided the day at Malvern Hill, and at Antietam and Gettysburg was one of the most important factors."

For Collectors Only

EDITED BY RALPH G. NEWMAN

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Chicago 11, Illinois

COVERING THE CIVIL WAR "BEAT"

THESE DAYS WE ARE CONSTANTLY reminded that there is a "Civil War revival," and that books relating to the War Between the States are (at least according to some authorities) outselling all other books in both the fiction and nonfiction fields. *Life* devotes 18 pages to the epic story; *Time* features a special section with color photographs of the battlefields; *Collier's* begins a new series with an elaborate (and expertly written) account of Lincoln's visit to Richmond; the usually blasé *New Yorker* devotes its entire literary section to a discussion of Civil War books; *Holiday* has begun publishing accounts of the major battles and other publications follow suit and plan even more impressive tributes to the Lincoln-Lee era.

New Civil War books are appearing at the staggering rate of more than a new title a week and at least one book club which attempts to distribute literature in this field has had to determine whether to become a "book-of-the-week club" or reconcile itself to distributing what its editors believe are the better books.

It was not always this way. Many of us recall the not-too-distant past when a first-rate Civil War title might be considered a success if the publisher could manage to sell 3,500 copies and a 5,000 copy sale was regarded as amazing. Sad enough, some of the best books in our favorite field never even reached these figures. Among the titles that graced the "remainder" lists were such classics as Marshall's *An Aide-de-Camp of Lee*, Sir Frederick Maurice's *Statesmen and Leaders of the Civil War* and the first edition of Randall's *Constitutional Problems Under Lincoln*.

Ordeal By Fire, the Fletcher Pratt book appeared on the list of *non* best-sellers until the new boom rescued it from publishing oblivion. It seems incredible to think that ten years ago the editor of the best single volume collection of the writings and speeches of Abraham Lincoln almost sold his rights to the book for a few hundred dollars because almost every major publisher had decided that a satisfactory market did not exist for the work. It was finally accepted and has remained in print ever since and I suspect will remain in the publisher's catalogue as long as the firm remains in business. The plates of Robert Selph Henry's "*First with the Most*" *Forrest* and Stanley F. Horn's *The Army of Tennessee* were melted down and the most colossal blunder of all occurred when the greatest of all of the classics, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, was allowed to go out-of-print.

What caused the present boom? Some say it is the imminence of the Civil War centennial; others that interest is cyclical and at regular intervals reappears. It would seem to your editor that *good* books and writing were responsible for the present happy state of Civil War affairs. I figure it all began back in 1926 when a comparatively young but already prematurely gray-haired poet and newspaperman turned to the writing of American history and the first two volumes of Carl Sandburg's *Abraham Lincoln* appeared. Sandburg showed that it was possible to write history and write excitingly at the same time. This was not new — Carlyle had known it, but evidently too many had forgotten or had never known the technique. It required a combination of genius, curiosity and story-telling ability. Stephen Vincent Benét's *John Brown's Body*, published in 1928, helped stir the kettle. The journalists were about to take over from the academicians. The Civil War was just another "beat" and they covered Grant and Lee, the Shenandoah Valley and Shiloh just as they had handled local crime, the world series or current politics. Lloyd Lewis, Douglas Southall Freeman, Allan Nevins (newspaperman turned professor), Stanley F. Horn, John W. Thomason, Jr., Robert Selph Henry and a lovely lady named Margaret Mitchell and many, many others put real people into stories that had been merely legends and the Civil War was suddenly dropped into the twentieth century as a *living legend*, a continuing story that would never end as long as the memory of man could be prompted by the genius of a writer who saw more than a statistic or a footnote in a dramatic moment in the 1861-1865 war.

Sandburg's *Lincoln* followed by Lewis' *Sherman* and Freeman's life of Lee brought these and other Civil War figures to life and then in 1936 a talented newspaperwoman in Atlanta dropped a literary bombshell called *Gone With the Wind* into our laps and we even forgot the depression while we stayed up nights following the fortunes of Scarlett O'Hara and Rhett Butler. Sandburg finished his Lincoln study with *The*

War Years in 1939 and Freeman began his three volumes on *Lee's Lieutenants* as the world went mad and World War II seemed to mark the end of the interest in a comparatively old-fashioned war.

World War II actually stirred up more interest in the Civil War. It gave many men (and women) lengthy periods of enforced leisure and some of them found that a book was not as frightening or formidable as they had thought it to be. They were somewhat curious about the art of war but more important they were curious about other Americans and were interested in other parts of their own country. Lads from the North met boys from the South and tried to figure out what made these fellows who called them "Yankees" tick. They fought side-by-side with these men and found it hard to believe that their grandfathers and greatgrandfathers had fought each other in a bloody war in which over a half-million men had died.

Other newspapermen joined the ranks of Civil War writers: Clifford Dowdey who had already given us a great novel of the War in *Bugles Blow No More*, wrote *Experiment in Rebellion*. V. C. "Pat" Jones came along with *Ranger Mosby*, and there were others, Burke Davis, Philip Van Doren Stern, MacKinlay Kantor, Earl Schenck Miers, Manly Wade Wellman, Jay Monaghan, E. B. "Pete" Long, Robert L. Kincaid, Harnett Kane, Daniel O'Flaherty, Richard O'Connor and Louis M. Starr. There was also Otto Eisenschiml (a newspaperman in his youth and now a chemist) who combined the curiosity of the scientist with the story-telling ability of the mystery writer and brought back to the literary headlines the story of Lincoln's assassination and who re-examined the evidence in *The Celebrated Case of FitzJohn Porter*.

And finally there was Bruce Catton whose meteoric rise has been one of the phenomena of publishing history. It seems incredible to realize that Catton's first Civil War book, *Mr. Lincoln's Army*, was published only five years ago. His trilogy dealing with the Army of the Potomac has been responsible for tens of thousands of new "recruits" enlisting in the vast army of the modern literary equivalent of the Loyal Legion, S.C.V., G.A.R. and U.D.C. His short biography of Grant makes us all impatient for the day when he can complete the larger Grant biography begun by the late Lloyd Lewis. His new one-volume history, *This Hallowed Ground*, has evoked unanimous praise from those who have had an opportunity to read the manuscript. He is now at work on the gigantic *Centennial History of the Civil War*, aided by E. B. Long who has charge of the original research.

The influence of the newspaperman on the historian writing in the same field has been noticeable and toward a good purpose. Some academicians have lost (or abandoned) that self-conscious style that seems to say, to be impressive in writing history you should be *dull*. Some of

the historians, however, never had this problem. The late James G. Randall could hold his own in any writing league and certainly the same can be said for Bell Irvin Wiley and his superb reporting of the story of the private soldier, North and South; Benjamin P. Thomas in his fine *Abraham Lincoln*; David Donald, William B. Hesseltine, Paul M. Angle, Frank E. Vandiver, Avery Craven, T. Harry Williams, Kenneth P. Williams, and Richard B. Harwell.

Good writing by the professional writer and historian have contributed in a major part to the Civil War revival — but the reader need not remind me that there were men of an earlier generation who could handle language. Some of the names that come to mind are those of U. S. Grant, Richard Taylor, John B. Gordon, Horace Greeley and Robert E. Lee. Sometimes they were more literary than they were accurate. Wasn't there a fellow back in 1863 who said, "The world will little note nor long remember."?

Notes & Queries

EDITED BY BOYD B. STUTLER

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Charleston, West Virginia

THIS DEPARTMENT IS DESIGNED AS AN OPEN FORUM FOR RESEARCHERS AND READERS OF *Civil War History* for questions on phases of the Great Conflict and its personnel. Also for notes on newly discovered or unrecorded sidelights of the war. Contributions are invited; address Notes and Queries Editor.

QUERIES

21. *150th Pennsylvania's Company "Q":*

I am attempting to research an unique organization which existed briefly in the Army of the Potomac — an outfit made up of officers court-martialed for cowardice. This unit, known as Company "Q", was attached to the 150th Pennsylvania Volunteers on May 13, 1864, near Spotsylvania. The members of this unhappy group were given the opportunity to redeem themselves by fighting as privates, and it may be said that most of the survivors of the detachment did redeem themselves and were restored to their commands. The history of Company "Q" is quite misty; the only references to it that I have been able to find are contained in Bruce Catton's *Stillness at Appomattox*, (page 215), and following this lead I found another mention in *History of the 150th Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers*, (pp. 197-198), by Lt. Col. Thomas Chamberlain, Executive Officer of the Regiment. Query: Can any reader tell me about Company "Q", or cite other sources of information?

Irving Werstein

22. *Origin of Memorial Day:*

I am deeply interested in determining the origin of Memorial Day, and the influences that brought about its establishment as our national

day of remembrance of our military and civilian dead. I am aware of several early local services held at various places, North and South — notably at Charleston, S.C., May 1, 1865; Carbondale, Ill., and Washington, D.C., 1866, and at other places — some one of which may have planted the suggestion of national observance. General John A. Logan was the principal speaker at the Carbondale, Ill., memorial service in April, 1866, ("First to Remember," by Ray Hubbs, in *American Legion Magazine*, June, 1937) and two years later as Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Army of the Republic he issued General Order No. 11 setting apart May 30, 1868, as a memorial day for the Civil War dead. Information on memorial services prior to 1868 is wanted. Query: Can any reader cite references to show what influenced General Logan to issue his historic General Order No. 11?

Ernest C. Klein

23. *Isaac Sherman and Lincoln's Proclamation:*

I have a framed engraving (copyright 1895) of Frank B. Carpenter's painting "Lincoln and his Cabinet," inscribed by Carpenter to Russell Sage. The text of the inscription is: "To Honorable Russell Sage with the compliments of the artist, Frank B. Carpenter, New York, December 18, 1897." Below the engraved picture is a facsimile of the Emancipation Proclamation of September, 1862. Inserted with the facsimile is a handwritten slip which reads: "Revised in the private office of Sherman & Wibert, No. 1, Hanover Square, New York, by Isaac Sherman at the request of President Lincoln." Query: Does any one know the background for the unsupported statement that Isaac Sherman revised the September draft of the Emancipation Proclamation?

Carl Haverlin

24. *"Lightning" Ellsworth and Sickles' Leg:*

This is a query on two subjects, not at all related. My point of interest is George Arthur Ellsworth, known as "Lightning" Ellsworth, who was chief telegraph operator for General John Hunt Morgan. He enlisted in Duke's 2nd Kentucky Cavalry in Chattanooga, and was of invaluable service to Morgan in his many raids, but little else of his life story seems to be known. Any information about him will be appreciated, particularly: where born, what he did in the twelve years after the war, when he died and where buried. Also, did he serve a sentence for murder in 1867?

Second Query: The *New York Tribune* for August 1, 1863, mentions the establishment of a new medical and surgical museum at the Surgeon General's Department in Washington where "the amputated legs of Generals Kirby and Sickles, showing the nature of their wounds, are

placed on the shelves of the museum." Query: Are the legs still preserved as museum exhibits?

Warren A. Reeder

25. *Colonel Henry Clay Pate, CSA:*

I am trying to reconstruct the life story of Colonel Henry Clay Pate, 5th Virginia Cavalry, CSA, who was killed at Yellow Tavern on the same day (May 11, 1864), and within a few hundred yards of the spot where his commander, General J. E. B. Stuart, received his mortal wound. Pate was a Missouri "border ruffian" captain in the Kansas Territorial wars, (captured by John Brown in the Black Jack fight, June 2, 1856), and was involved in feuds and controversies with his superiors after entering the Confederate States Army. A positive character with a faculty for picking troubled spots, much that has been written about him is conflicting and inaccurate as well as partisan and biased. I am seeking letters and records covering any phase of his career, as well as information on his early life at Peytona, now in West Virginia; at Louisville, Kentucky, and Cincinnati, Ohio, in the 1850s. Any information will be appreciated.

Samuel H. Miller

26. *What CSA Outfit Used John Brown's Pikes?*

When, in the summer of 1859, John Brown assembled arms for his raid on Harper's Ferry he had 954 pikes in addition to an ample supply of firearms (pikes: long blades mounted on 6-foot staffs). These were provided to arm the negro slaves that were expected to flock into Brown's "Army of Liberation" when the first blow was struck. A few of the pikes were carried into Harper's Ferry by the raiders; some were hauled to a nearby schoolhouse which had been pressed into service as a depot for the reserve supply of arms, but the greater number were left at the Kennedy Farm, Brown's rendezvous on the Maryland side of the Potomac. After the failure of the *putsch* a number of the weapons were carried off by militiamen and souvenir hunters, but the U.S. Marines recovered 483 of the lot at the Kennedy Farm, which Colonel (later General) Robert E. Lee stored in the arsenal at Harper's Ferry. When that town was taken by Confederate forces (Virginia State troops) on the night of April 18, 1861, the pikes fell into the hands of the Confederates and were later shipped to Richmond with the armory and arsenal equipment. In 1862, when the South became desperate for small arms, the pikes were issued to a cavalry outfit (said to have been a Texas unit) for use as lances, and were so used throughout the rest of the war. The unit surrendered in or near Alabama at the close of hostilities — at any rate the few remaining John Brown pikes were stored in the arsenal at Mount Vernon, Alabama,

and kept there until some time in the late 1870's. Query: What Confederate Cavalry outfit used John Brown's pikes?

Boyd B. Stutler

ANSWERS

Query 11. *Lincoln's U.S. Supreme Court Cases:*

C. C. Tisler, Ottawa, Illinois, writes: I believe I have part of the answer to the query of Benjamin Barondess about the identity of "Mr. Purple" who filed a brief in a law case in the U.S. Supreme Court in which Abraham Lincoln was interested. He was probably Justice Norman H. Purple, who was on the Illinois Supreme Court bench from 1845 to 1848, and was an associate of Lincoln on the judicial circuit. The records show that Purple and Lincoln appeared before the State Supreme Court (Northern Branch) at Ottawa in the summer of 1851 as attorneys, but not as associate counsel, in law cases tried before that body.

Query 12. *Army Surgeon Author:*

George T. Ness, Jr., Baltimore, Maryland, by a process of elimination supplies the answer to Carl Haverlin's query about the authorship of *Reminiscences of an Army Surgeon, 1860-1863*. Of the four surgeons named as possible authors, Mr. Ness says: "If the *Reminiscences* was written by any one of them it must have been Charles C. Byrne, as he seems to have been the only man on the scenes described in the book," and cites Hammersly's *Records of Living Officers of the U.S. Army*. This record states that Byrne was at Camp Verde and Fort McIntosh, Texas, until about the time Texas seceded, and that he was with Sibley's command of the 3rd Infantry when captured and paroled by the Confederates — which agrees with the *Reminiscences*. The record of capture is confirmed in the *Official Records*, Series II, Volume 1, page 61. Charles Christopher Byrne was born at Pikesville, Maryland, May 7, 1837; M.D., University of Maryland, 1859; appointed Assistant Surgeon, U.S. Army, 1860; retired as Colonel, 1901, then serving as Assistant Surgeon-General; advanced to Brigadier General, Retired, 1904; died November 8, 1921. Brief sketch is found in *Who Was Who in America*, Volume 1, page 180.

Query 13. *Kite-dropping Civil War Propaganda:*

While no direct reply has been received to R. K. Haerle's query about General B. F. Butler dropping copies of Lincoln's amnesty proclamation over Confederate lines by use of a kite, Ralph W. Donnelly, Washington, D.C., cites the use of kites by other commands to carry propaganda to the Confederates. "I feel that the questioner," writes Mr. Donnelly, "might be looking for a letter from General E. O. C. Ord to Major Generals Weitzel and Gibbons and Colonel West, dated Headquarters Department of Virginia, March 19, 1865, in which he says: 'On the Bermuda front the

order (General Grant's) promising to pay for arms and horses has been circulated with kites, bows and arrows, and newspapers. The cross of deserters from the division there is about twenty-five a night. There is no reason why the same cross should not be reached on the north of the James. You will take every measure to circulate the order at once and daily.' On the same day Major General John Gibbon, commanding the 24th Army Corps, wrote General Ord: "Please send me some more of General Grant's orders and a man who understands your mode of fixing them to a kite." The correspondence is found in *Official Records*, Series I, Volume 46, Part 3, page 43.

Query 14. *Stonewall Jackson's Bible Studies*:

In partial reply to E. T. Crowson's inquiry about Stonewall Jackson's religious studies, Warren A. Reeder, Hammond, Indiana, writes: "My study of Stonewall Jackson's Bible convinces me that as a busy man he had to squeeze in his Bible study as best he could. He did what most of us do today — he turned to commentaries. I searched a long time to determine just where his notes on the margins of his Bible came from — then discovered the source in his personal library, now safely kept in the Battle Abbey, Richmond, Virginia. He used *Notes on the New Testament*, by Albert Barnes, noted Bible student and pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, whose works cover the entire New Testament and several books of the Old Testament. His books were reprinted in their entirety in 1954. Jackson was probably influenced to select Barnes by his Presbyterian pastor, but it was an enduring selection."

NOTES

The Lost Cause Press, 2116 Confederate Place, Louisville, Kentucky, is reproducing on microcard all the titles in E. M. Coulter's *Travels in the Confederate States* which are in the public domain or for which copyright releases can be secured. It is estimated that about ninety percent of the titles will ultimately be available. Prospectuses for the series can be had from the Lost Cause Press.

HURRAH!

By a Mississippian

Hurrah! for the Southern Confederate State,
With her banner of white, red, and blue;
Hurrah! for her daughters, the fairest on earth,
And her sons, ever loyal and true!

Hurrah! and hurrah! for her brave volunteers,
Enlisted for freedom or death;
Hurrah! for Jeff. Davis, Commander-in-chief,
And three cheers for the Palmetto wreath!

Hurrah! for each heart that is right in the cause;
That cause we'll protect with our lives;
Hurrah! for the first one who dies on the field,
And hurrah! for each one who survives!

Hurrah! for the South — shout hurrah! and hurrah!
O'er her soil shall no tyrant have sway.
In peace or in war we will ever be found
"Invincible," now and for aye.

—*Mobile Register*

The Continuing War

EDITED BY RICHARD B. HARWELL

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Richmond, Virginia

EXACTLY CONVERSELY TO THE CAMPAIGNS and battles of the Civil War the books about the War slow down in frequency during the summer. The Confederate and Union armies held what novelist John Esten Cooke called "the mire truce" of winter. Their spiritual descendants, the Civil War buffs of 1956, relax the continuing literary war during the heat of summer — perhaps to read the manifold productions of the months preceding, perhaps to work out on actual fields what they have learned from books, perhaps to renew acquaintance with wives and families. But the summer is soon over, and the 1956-57 book season promises a steady stream of new items about the War.

Two of the leading fall books are delayed items from the spring. Bell Wiley's fine edition of Nat Wood's *Reminiscences of Big I* is a selection of the Civil War Book Club and should be in your hands by the time this number of *Civil War History* reaches you. Also postponed from the spring was Bruce Catton's *This Hallowed Ground*. Another selection of the CWBC, this volume is eagerly awaited, the first major historical publication of Pulitzer Prize winning Catton since his wonderful trilogy of Lincoln's army.

Burke Davis, like Catton a reporter turned historian, has come up with two winners in his recent one-volume biographies of Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee. He, again like Catton, aims at the transmission of the spirit of the war, the essence of his subject, rather than at definitive biography. He strives to produce in short compass a lively, realistic portrayal of an individual. The success of *They Called Him Stonewall* and *The Gray Fox* is measure enough of his success. Mr. Davis is now at

work on a book about a third great Confederate hero — J. E. B. Stuart. There is doubtless a third winner in the making, but the author, who faced hard tasks in the wake of G. F. R. Henderson's *Jackson* and of D. S. Freeman's *Lee*, faces an even harder job here. The Henderson and Freeman books were serious, scholarly biographies. With an account of Stuart, Mr. Davis will be competing with the still in print and still popular *JEB Stuart* of the late John Thomason. To maintain his high average, Mr. Davis will have to develop previously unused materials to a higher degree than was necessary before. The results will be interesting — and interesting to read.

Still on the Confederate side: Clifford Dowdey is finishing a novel on the James River plantation country of Virginia that will be enlightening in its background for Virginia at war. The book is the story of Berkeley Hundred from the days of its first settlement across more than two hundred years to the beginning of the Civil War. Next on Mr. Dowdey's work schedule is a minute-by-minute account of Pickett's charge at Gettysburg to be titled, appropriately enough, *Pickett's Charge*.

Another forthcoming book which will give much of the background of the War is John Hope Franklin's *The Militant South, 1800-1861* which Harvard will publish in September. And Oxford's fall lists will include a history of cotton, certainly a product directly related to the causes of the War.

Rinehart will publish the major fall book on Lincoln — a new collection of comments on him by contemporaries that reflects tremendous research and promises some really new material.

Bruce Lancaster and F. Van Wyck Mason, old pros among Civil War novelists, each has a new book for the fall season. Lancaster's is *Roll Shenandoah*, a story of the closing months of the War in the Valley of Virginia. Mason's is a third volume in his series of novels on the naval history of the War. This one, *Our Valiant Few*, is a story of besieged Charleston and of Confederate efforts to break the blockade.

The Virginia State Library will undertake publication of the first supplement to Marjorie Lyle Crandall's monumental bibliography, *Confederate Imprints*. The completed publication is a long way off, but additional entries for the record should be in the hands of the compiler of the supplement (the editor of this section of *Civil War History*) by the end of 1956. Already more than four hundred additional Confederate publications have been located for addition to the list.

The university presses almost match the commercial publishing houses in the number of their Civil War titles. Chapel Hill (the University of North Carolina Press) has two particularly promising titles coming out in November, John G. Barrett's *Sherman's March Through the Carolinas* and Robert G. Lively's *Fiction Fights the Civil War*. Dr. Barrett's book is not

a repetition of Earl S. Miers' lively and readable *The General Who Marched to Hell* but a different approach to the same subject. It should prove a valuable shelf companion for the earlier volume. As Margaret Mitchell said (in another connection): "Any good plot can stand retelling." (Mr. Miers, by the way, has plans for editing in full the charming and girlish diary of Emma LeConte kept by the young South Carolinian during Sherman's march through her state.)

Mr. Lively's contribution is a "study of over five hundred novels dealing with the Civil War, written in the period from the 1860's through the 1940's, including several first-rate novels, several score good novels, and several hundred examples of what should be classed as sub-literature." Coming after Ralph Newman's recent provocative piece in *Civil War History* (it provoked this writer into doing "Gone With Miss Ravenel's Courage; or, So Red the Bugles: The Civil War Novel Through the Years" in a summer issue of *The Virginia Librarian*) the Princeton professor's view of the same subject should be especially interesting.

From L. S. U. will come in the late fall two small books by premier Civil War historians, Frank Vandiver and Stanley Horn. Both of these titles are expected to be selections of the Civil War Book Club. Vandiver's *Rebel Brass* is a study of the Confederate groping for an adequate system of command. His publisher's announcement asserts that "underlying the whole discussion is the theme that the South suffered from a split personality."

Equally interesting will be Mr. Horn's *The Decisive Battle of Nashville*. Whether or not you agree that the author is right in his basic assumption of the importance of the battle you will find his arguments provocative and his blow-by-blow account both authoritative and well written.

P.S. So many collectors (and dealers, to believe the catalogs) seem to think that Dr. Douglas S. Freeman's *Calendar of Confederate Papers* (at the Confederate Museum in Richmond) is out-of-print, that I thought I would insert this notice. It is still very much in print and a slow but steady seller. Copies may still be ordered directly from the Museum.

THE VARUNA

Sunk April Twenty-fifth, 1862

George H. Boker

Who has not heard of the dauntless Varuna?
Who has not heard of the deeds she has done?
Who shall not hear, while the brown Mississippi
Rushes along from the snow to the sun?

Crippled and leaking she entered the battle,
Sinking and burning she fought through the fray,
Crushed were her sides and the waves ran across her,
Ere, like a death-wounded lion at bay,
Sternly she closed in the last fatal grapple,
Then in her triumph moved grandly away.

Five of the rebels, like satellites round her,
Burned in her orbit of splendor and fear;
One, like the pleiad of mystical story,
Shot, terror-stricken, beyond her dread sphere.

We who are waiting with crowns for the victors,
Though we should offer the wealth of our store,
Load the Varuna from deck down to Kelson,
Still would be niggard, such tribute to pour
On courage so boundless. It beggars possession,
It knocks for just payment at heaven's bright door!

Cherish the heroes who fought the Varuna;
Treat them as kings if they honor your way;
Succor and comfort the sick and the wounded;
Oh! for the dead, let us all kneel to pray.

Book Reviews

EDITED BY CHARLES T. MILLER

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Iowa City, Iowa

Lincoln and the Tools of War. By Robert V. Bruce. (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc. 1956. Pp. xv, 368. \$5.00.)

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S INTEREST in weapons in general and novel hand weapons in particular has often been mentioned, but seldom if ever before has this subject been so thoroughly explored and at the same time so divertingly told. The list of inventions in which the President took a personal interest ranges from the highly practical to the utterly mad, and includes most of those which were later accepted for service. But no inventions were readily accepted, and the conflict between the inventors (usually with Presidential encouragement) and the officers of Army and Navy Ordnance grew so intense that this scholarly volume has some of the fascination of a novel.

The Army Ordnance Department gets fuller treatment than the Navy's Bureau of Ordnance, not only because the Army was much larger but also because of the personality of one of its chiefs. Although Lincoln is the announced protagonist of this book, there is an antagonist who fully rates the billing in the person of Brigadier General James Wolfe Ripley. The real story begins when Ripley became Chief of Ordnance, and in a sense, the tale becomes anticlimactic after his retirement in September, 1863. Of the book's twenty chapters, only the last two concern the post-Ripley period.

Mr. Bruce devotes his first three chapters to sketching the backgrounds of Lincoln, Ripley, and John A. Dahlgren of the Navy. From Lincoln's early life the author stresses his natural interest in things mechanical and his delight in handling and firing weapons. He reminds us that Lincoln, as a young Congressman, invented and patented a device for lifting vessels over shoals; this was never produced, but it might have been useful on the Red River. Despite his sketchy education, Lincoln possessed what Mr. Bruce calls "the engineer's exact and tenacious mind." In taking the part of any and all inventors, how-

ever, the President revealed a certain lack of appreciation of the problems and pitfalls of contracts and production.

The author then turns to the ordnance side of the picture. The history of the Army's Ordnance Department is presented briefly, and here one might wish for a few more pages, for a knowledge of the background and psychology of the Department is essential to an understanding of General Ripley and his outlook. Despite the youth of the Department — organized during the War of 1812, it had been abolished in 1821 and reestablished in 1832 — it was marked by the advanced age of its senior officers. A week after Fort Sumter the seventy year old Chief of Ordnance was eased out to make room for a younger man, and it is significant that his "young" successor was Ripley, only sixty-six. Few ordnance officers went South in 1861, and only a handful sought service in the line of the Volunteers, with the result that the Department benefited by no such accelerated promotions and new talent as fell to other departments or most of the Regular Army regiments. The senior officers of the Ordnance Department were intelligent, honest, and technically competent, but in the young new volunteer army they were undeniably old and relatively unimaginative. General Ripley, according to the author, considered himself "as preserver of the Union Army from newfangled gimcracks."

This situation was not so prevalent in the Navy. A greater proportion of Naval Ordnance officers joined the Confederacy, and younger men came to the fore. The author focuses on two in particular: Dahlgren, inventor of the gun bearing his name, who was a youthful fifty-one in 1861; and Henry A. Wise, cousin of the fiery Virginian, a mere forty-one. Commander Dahlgren appears as commandant of the Washington Navy Yard, in whom Lincoln found a kindred spirit; the two became friends, and the President spent many hours at the Navy Yard observing test firing. In the summer of 1862 Dahlgren reluctantly became Chief of the Ordnance Bureau, preferring the sea duty and flag rank which he finally obtained in mid-1863. Wise, his successor, was an able Chief, but he was not as close to Lincoln, and references to the Ordnance Bureau are less frequent after Dahlgren's departure.

Coincident with the fall of Fort Sumter and Lincoln's call for volunteers, there began to descend upon Washington a horde of inventors, each with his promoters and his official contacts within the capital. Some had inventions of genuine merit, others advanced ideas that were worth a try, and quite a few were of the genus *screwball*. They had one thing, at least, in common: they all quickly bloodied their heads against the implacable Chief of Ordnance, General Ripley. Recoiling dazedly, they turned in despair and wrath to the Chief Magistrate, and in Abraham Lincoln most of them found a ready ear.

It is surprising that the President found the time to listen to so many inventors, to inspect their models, even to fire some of their weapons. Presumably he found a certain relief from his other problems, and from importunate office-seekers, in this sphere of applied mechanics. An invention that seemed to him to have promise would be referred with a note to Secretary of War Stanton, or direct to the Chief of Ordnance. When these officials were not available, the President might arrange for test firing by Captain Stephen Vincent Benét at West Point. For professional advice Lincoln called on Joseph Henry of the

Smithsonian, or on the Chief of Army Engineers, General Totten. In many ways the President interfered outrageously in the internal affairs of the War Department, but the results were almost always negative — General Ripley turned thumbs down. Inventors raged, the press castigated Ripley, and Lincoln himself on several occasions expressed disappointment that certain promising weapons had been rejected out of hand by the Chief of Ordnance. The question arose then, as it will to the reader: why did not Lincoln order Ripley's relief?

The fact was, of course, that Ripley was doing a good job in the overall ordnance picture; otherwise, he would never have survived the impact of the arrival of Secretary Stanton. As the author points out, for all of his faults, "Stanton offered the nation a combination of energy, loyalty, and official integrity that was hard to match." That Ripley lasted the better part of two years under Stanton is indirect proof of his worth. For Ripley reflected the Ordnance theory that an old but proved weapon in the hands of troops is better than the finest of new weapons on the drawing board or in model stage. As a former commandant of Springfield Armory, Ripley knew at first hand the complexities of contracts, production, and distribution. And while in any story of wartime inventions he must appear as an antiquated obstructionist, yet in retrospect he finds a measure of vindication. During a period when everyone expected the war to be over in ninety days, or at most six months, Ripley was concentrating on getting serviceable weapons, not scale models, to the regiments of the mushrooming volunteer army. If existing weapons meant refurbished muskets, Springfield muzzle-loaders, and a mass of hastily procured Belgian, Austrian, and other European arms, then that was the way it was going to be. If Ripley could have known that the war would last until 1865, his attitude might have been somewhat different.

There is a suspicion that the author, to whom Ripley is of necessity the villain of the piece, has a certain respect for the old man. More than once, in this story of ingenious Yankees and their inventions, Mr. Bruce tries to see Ripley's point of view, and even now and then slips in a good word for the much-maligned Chief of Ordnance. Certain it is that when Ripley retires in September of 1863, at sixty-nine, something goes out of the story with him. The short tenure of his immediate successor, George D. Ramsey, was enlivened by a feud with one of his assistants, while the last and perhaps most able wartime Chief of Ordnance, Alexander B. Dyer, came onto the scene too late to affect materially either the war or the story.

Even more interesting than the high-level dissensions are the tales of the various inventors and their brain-children. In highly readable style the author recounts anecdotes and vignettes, many rescued from the obscurity of Ordnance records, that vary from the serious to the hilarious. At the same time, Mr. Bruce highlights the really important inventions of the period, so that the sheer numbers of gadgets and Rube Goldberg contraptions are not allowed to submerge such important results as the Spencer carbine, Lowe's balloons, and the early attempts which led, sooner or later, to effective machine guns and breech-loading field pieces. The author also points out some of the more important relationships between ordnance and diplomacy, as when he demonstrates the tie-in between the availability of nitre and the settlement of the *Trent* affair.

The book is also an excellent reference for those who might wish to revive vague recollections of such items as the "Swamp Angel," or the suicidal double-barreled chain-shot gun, or the centrifugal musket-ball slinger, or the Civil War versions of the flame thrower and body armor.

In *Lincoln and the Tools of War* the present Chief of Ordnance would certainly recognize problems that have faced him and his immediate predecessors. The muzzle-loader vs. breech-loader controversy was echoed, on the eve of the second World War, in the arguments between supporters of the Springfield and the Garand rifles. Those who felt that the faster-firing Garand would encourage soldiers to fire without aiming and to waste ammunition were using the theme of General Ripley's defense of the musket in 1861 — and in both cases the argument had some merit. For there will probably always be with us Ripley's basic problem: to put existing stockpiled weapons into the hands of the troops, or to gamble on crash production of relatively untried weapons of great potential value.

The research behind this volume has obviously been painstaking and literally exhaustive; in fact, Mr. Bruce has really assembled enough material for several volumes, and therein lies what is perhaps the only adverse criticism — the subject is too big to be compressed into three hundred pages. Because of this mass of material, the author adheres neither to a strict chronological development nor to a progressive treatment of each type of weapon, but seeks a middle road; as a result, the story appears to jump back and forth unnecessarily, particularly in the second half of the book. But to compensate for this fault — if fault it is — the author furnishes a complete set of notes, covering forty-four pages at the end of the text; there are no source footnotes, but any statement or quotation can easily be traced through an ideal system of page and paragraph references. Add to this a ten-page bibliography and a comprehensive index, and it will be seen that in addition to presenting a highly readable story, Mr. Bruce has made a valuable contribution to Civil War research.

ARTHUR P. WADE

West Point, New York

The Desolate South, 1865-1866. By John T. Trowbridge. Edited by Gordon Carroll. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company. 1956. Pp. xvi, 320. \$6.00.)

AMONG SEVERAL NORTHERNERS AND EUROPEANS who visited the South after the Civil War and wrote accounts of their experiences was John T. Trowbridge, abolitionist, journalist, and editor. His report was one of the fullest and one of the best, not as objective as he thought but as balanced as could be expected under the circumstances. Holding a high opinion of the pen over the sword, he remained in Boston until the summer of 1865, but in the next few months went into every Southern state except Texas. Trowbridge clearly disliked "rebels" and shaded his narrative as became a proper Bostonian of 1865, but the factual part seems authentic. He visited battlefields and towns, observed and talked with all classes of the population, and related his experiences with a good deal of gusto. His account of the physical condition of the South and its

confused state of mind is sounder than his misplaced optimism concerning the future of the South and the prospects of the negro race. The work of the freedmen's schools, the negro as laborer, the condition of the battlefields, and the poverty of the people are recurring themes.

The editor's task has been to reduce the text by perhaps one-third, supply a brief biographical introduction, and substitute photographs for the contemporary maps and drawings. His work concerns the original edition of 1866 (a second, enlarged edition appeared in 1868), and Mr. Carroll's editorship is not of the best. He asserts that he has "removed nothing of significance," but he has eliminated the footnotes, "several chapters," and numerous paragraphs. He has recast phrases to improve the continuity. None of these changes or omissions is indicated in the text. There is no index. The student will prefer the original; the casual reader will find the present edition easy going.

ROBERT H. WOODY

Durham, North Carolina

Civil War on Western Waters. By Fletcher Pratt. (New York: Henry Holt and Company. 1956. Pp. 255. \$3.50.)

SOME OF THE CURRENT FLOOD OF WRITING about the Civil War is criticized as vainly repetitious, but this cannot be said of the late Fletcher Pratt's book, *Civil War on Western Waters*. Considering the enormous importance, to both North and South, of the Mississippi and its tributaries, the one needing the Father of Waters to ship out the iron of Pittsburgh, the coal of West Virginia, and the wheat and corn of the farm states, the other side absorbing at Memphis and New Orleans much of that commerce while using the river to ship cotton north, it is surprising that until now only Alfred Thayer Mahan has made a serious attempt to describe and evaluate the river war.

This is the task set for himself by the late Fletcher Pratt, and in the main he has succeeded admirably. His book is written in racy journalese. This is a refreshing change from the academic jargon beloved of so many professional historians; occasionally inaccurate, it makes reading stimulating and interesting. However, this journalistic style occasionally carries over into more serious matters. Mr. Pratt is given to snap judgments about people and events and sometimes his slap-dash approach leads him into error, as, for instance, in his thumbnail sketch of Stephen R. Mallory, Secretary of the Confederate Navy, as "earnest, assiduous, and ignorant, who always wore tight pants." No one who has carefully read Joseph T. Durkin's recent biography of Mallory would unqualifiedly call him "ignorant." Furthermore, this book has altogether too many typographical errors. The place on the Tennessee River, for example should be spelled either "Mussel Shoals" or "Muscle Shoals" but not both. However, minor criticism aside, this book is a sizeable contribution to our understanding of the Civil War and of the role of naval power in military matters generally.

At the very outset both sides were faced with the problem of trying to improvise ships, armament, and tactics to fight a sea war on the Mississippi and her tributaries. Nothing like it had been done before. The North was lucky,

because it possessed industrial might. To this was added the ingenuity and drive of civilians like John B. Eads, who designed shallow draft gunboats which pointed the way to all successful future construction for the river war. Samuel M. Pook contributed his armored "turtles," which also saw yeoman service. On the other hand, the North was hindered by the fact that the army for a long time exercised command over these vessels and, indeed, even manned them. This was unification with a vengeance. Not until the days of doughty Farragut and David Dixon Porter, both newly appointed to the newly-created rank of Rear Admiral, would the navy exercise tactical control over the river vessels, although, of course, over-all direction remained in the hands of Grant and Sherman.

For her part, the South had even greater troubles. Industrially, she was hopeless. Not a single marine engine could be manufactured anywhere in the South. No forge capable of turning out a proper shaft for a major war vessel lay anywhere in the Confederacy. Consequently, the Southern efforts in ship-building consisted of arming and armoring existing river vessels, and the designing of some moderately successful rams. If the North's command problem was irritating, that of the South was intolerable. No one ever knew who commanded at New Orleans; this was typical throughout the river war.

This uncertainty as to command responsibility hindered both sides in the carrying out of their tactical and strategic plans. In general, the North used its navy aggressively, in support of land armies. The turtles, for example, played a large part in the capture of Fort Henry on the Tennessee and in the taking of the strategic Island Number Ten in the Mississippi. Later, combined operations were to capture Vicksburg. The South, on the other hand, assumed a posture defensive. She conceived of naval power in terms of the boom at New Orleans and never grasped, as did Grant and Farragut, the enormous potential of combined operations.

After the initial Northern débacle at Head of Passes, one might have expected that New Orleans could have been defended against Farragut and Porter. However, the Northern forces under the impetuous Farragut broke through the boom, destroyed the Southern fleet defending New Orleans, and captured that city without help from any army. This battle, a confused nighttime melee, is vividly and clearly described by our author.

In the meantime, the Northern portion of the Union River Navy, commanded by tenacious Foote, pushed southward to join Farragut and Porter, and captured Memphis with the aid of effective and speedy rams designed by Charles Ellet, Jr., a civil engineer and colonel in the Union army. All that remained was the long drawn-out capture of Vicksburg, and with its fall, the Mississippi and all its tributaries were henceforth denied to Confederate forces. The rest of the river war was a series of small mopping-up operations, amphibious in nature.

Of course, this success was not achieved without the usual personal rivalries at the high levels of command. Porter thought Farragut too old, although the latter's drive and daring showed how wrong Porter was. And although Grant and Sherman understood and cooperated with naval forces, the same could not be said for many others, including those in high places in Washington. Jealousy

likewise plagued the Confederates, and they had the added bitterness of losing.

Certainly it is high time a book such as this appeared. When one studies the really extraordinary success of these combined operations, when one understands that the war in the West probably could not have been won without the navy, one is mystified at the neglect shown this phase of the war by most historians. Not only did the South lose New Orleans, Memphis, Vicksburg, and many other lesser strongholds, but all commerce by water and much by rail was interdicted by the Union navy. Furthermore, this war taught the navy its kindergarten course in amphibious warfare and led to developments which culminated in the second World War. Naval construction and armament were vitally affected by the lessons of the Civil War; it was not until just before the first World War that our navy abandoned the shallow draft type of vessels made necessary in the war on the rivers. Finally, many naval heroes emerged, as evidenced in the names of prominent destroyers in the second World War: Farragut, Porter, Hoskins, Brown, Ellet, and many others were names to conjure with in the recent global conflict. Students of the Civil War and of history generally owe the late Mr. Pratt a heavy debt for calling attention to the importance of this side of the war and for presenting his materials in a book so concise, vivid, and stimulating.

SAMUEL M. FAHR

Iowa City, Iowa

Civil War on the Western Border, 1854-1865. By Jay Monaghan. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company. 1955. Pp. 454. \$6.00.)

TO MANY READERS OF BOOKS ON THE CIVIL WAR the role of Kansas and Missouri has been somewhat confusing. Several border tales have only beclouded what was already a tangled skein of motives, drives, and purposes, but in *Civil War on the Western Border* Jay Monaghan comes to the rescue with a clearly developed account of the border struggle.

Prior to 1861, while what was eventually to erupt into civil war simmered in the eastern states, mostly in the form of heated words, the western border experienced an entirely different development. In both Kansas and Missouri the division of feeling was sharp, and the former state became the setting for a violence vendetta-like in nature. Emigrant Aid Societies worked diligently and fervently to sell the idea of homesteading in Kansas, and in response anti-slavery settlers travelled from Ohio, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and New England aboard crowded Ohio River steamboats. At the same time, the pro-slavery elements in Kansas were far from inactive, and the mad scramble was on for control of this western territory.

Events see-sawed through the 1850's, with now the free-state officials in power and then the pro-slavery forces in the saddle. In crucial instances the latter element did not hesitate to call upon Missouri for reinforcements. Territorial governors led precarious lives; their tenures were brief as some resigned in haste and others were arrested for "treason." With feelings running high, the town of Lawrence was sacked by an "army" consisting of the Platte County

(Missouri) Rifles, the Kickapoo Rangers, the recently arrived Southern emigrants, and other units — all under the notorious Border Ruffians.

It was now John Brown's turn. Although too late to ride to the rescue of Lawrence, he struck back at Osawatomie Creek, and this pattern of violence was repeated in the months ahead with Kansas nights red with barn burning, dry gulching, and ambushing. Brown's raids were preludes to the full-scale warfare which erupted after the fall of Fort Sumter. The Battle of Carthage, the Battle of Wilson's Creek, the fall of Lexington, the Battle of Pea Ridge, the Battle of Prairie Grove, and the Battle of Westport were hard-fought, bloody encounters. Locales such as Baxter Springs, Cabin Creek, Pilot Knob, and Centralia flared into the news as settings for brief but violent brushes with bands of bushwhackers like Quantrill's guerrillas.

Although teeming with a complexity of names, places, and frontier politics, Mr. Monaghan's book hews to the main line of development and presents a dramatic part of America's rich, varied pattern of growth. His style is forceful, and his canvas is vivid; each detail stands in sharp relief and in proper sequence. This is an exciting as well as informative book.

ARNOLD GATES

Garden City, New York

The Battle Cry of Freedom: The New England Emigrant Aid Company in the Kansas Crusade. By Samuel A. Johnson. (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press. 1954. Pp. 357. \$5.00.)

THE CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY YEAR, 1954, of the creation of the Kansas-Nebraska Territory brought forth several books and essays concerning the territorial era. Some of these works were scholarly, while others treated the events in a popular manner. Samuel A. Johnson has presented a study of one active organization and the role it played in the development of the Kansas Territory, and thus has filled a gap in American history with his well-balanced, scholarly work.

At the same time that Stephen A. Douglas was pushing the Kansas-Nebraska bill through Congress, Eli Thayer was making plans to save Kansas for *Freedom*, and to block forever the further expansion of slavery. To Thayer, squatter's sovereignty was a challenge and an opportunity, as it offered a chance to fill Kansas Territory with a free-labor population and to beat the South at its own game. Accordingly, the New England Emigrant Aid Company was organized, securing its first charter from the Massachusetts legislature in 1854 and a second charter in the following year, taking the form of a private-stock company which spent almost \$200,000 on its Kansas venture.

Many prominent New Englanders enlisted to support Thayer. Edward Everett Hale was one of the first to join, and business men contributed large amounts of capital to aid the cause of freedom. John Williams, Amos Lawrence, Samuel Howe, Thomas Webb, William Shooner, John Lowell, John Carter Brown, and Samuel Cabot were among those taking an active part. Their purposes were to promote migration, secure reduced transportation rates,

provide organized traveling groups, and ease the problems of the settlers in the new territory. Hotels, mills, schools, churches, and other facilities were to be built by the Company, and agents were sent to Kansas to further this work.

It was the hope of the founders that some financial return would come to the Company from donated lands and from the operation of newly acquired businesses. Their stake in the enterprise was basically financial rather than ideological; although they hoped for "free-state" supporters, no emigrant was bound to support the idea of a free territory, and most of the Company's members were hostile to the Garrisonian abolitionists. The march of events, however, changed this emphasis considerably. The towns established by the Company became lively centers of "free-state" activity, and as the political tension increased, the Company speeded up its financial and political activities, including the dispatch of both Bibles and weapons to support the "free-state" leaders.

The New England Emigrant Aid Company was never a financial success. Its agents were reckless with provided funds, and too often the business enterprises were not carefully supervised. Its success lay in other fields. Mr. Johnson has soundly evaluated the influence of this minority group in the border warfare and other political consequences of the territorial issues as they impinged upon the national scene. He believes that the Company had a vital part in making Kansas a free state. It was not the large neutral group of settlers that shaped the destinies of the future state, but the activities of a vigorous, aggressive minority that placed Kansas among the "free states" in the Union.

The author has made good use of the extensive collections of sources at the Kansas State Historical Society and of the many records in New England libraries. His work is carefully documented. It has separated fact from legend, and is essential in the understanding of the political and sectional background of the Civil War.

A. BOWER SAGESER

Manhattan, Kansas

Sickles the Incredible. By W. A. Swanberg. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1956. Pp. xii, 433. \$6.00.)

DAN SICKLES' MOMENTS ON HISTORY'S STAGE could never be criticized for inaction or lack of interest. Of native wit, shrewdly intelligent, and with a will much stronger than either parental influence or school discipline, he turned to the law, studied under the guidance of Benjamin F. Butler, and was admitted to the bar in 1843 — after a concurrent study of the law and Tammany politics. His first venture in the national political arena caused no little stir both at home and in London, where for a time he was Secretary to the American Ambassador. After assisting in the preparation of the "Ostend Manifesto," Sickles returned to the States, simultaneously resuming his law practice and joining the Buchanan-for-president boom. He and Buchanan went to Washington after the 1856 elections.

Congressman Sickles soon became a popular host, a friend of the conservative group, and a well considered member of the House. With his young and beautiful wife as hostess, Sickles' influence was increasing in the political world. Then came the disclosure of Teresa's infidelity with Philip Barton Key, the handsome scion of one of Maryland's most famous families. Promptly Sickles shot him down on a Washington street, was acquitted with an acclamation, and was then roundly condemned when he again took Teresa under his roof. On March 4, 1861, he was out of office, and April found him unhappily practicing law in his father's office. The guns in Charleston Harbor brought him back to the national stage.

Commissioned by Governor Morgan of New York to raise a brigade of five regiments, Sickles tackled the job with energy. Although caught in a storm of state politics, with the Republican administration hostile to the appointment of a Tammany brigadier general, Sickles engaged Delmonico's staff as his mess department, fought off orders disbanding his unit, went to see President Lincoln, and was saved from possible obscurity by the force of events — this time the remnants of the Union Army fleeing across the Long Bridge after Bull Run. Lincoln called up his unit.

Sickles' "Excelsior Brigade" was sworn in as "United States Volunteers." They served with bravery and distinction on the Peninsula, at Chancellorsville, and at Gettysburg. Dan Sickles likewise served well and became a major general, commanding the III Corps of the Army of the Potomac. The climax of his fighting career came in the Peach Orchard at Gettysburg. Whether his audacity blunted Longstreet's offensive spirit and saved the battle or whether his disobedience almost lost the battle (and the Union) is still debated, and Mr. Swanberg wisely presents the facts without taking either extremely partisan position.

Sickles lost a leg and ended his combat career at Gettysburg, but went on as a "confidant of presidents" to become military governor of South Carolina and, later, Ambassador to Spain. The international spotlight focused on him again when his affair with deposed Queen Isabella gave him the unofficial title of the "Yankee King of Spain." He took enough time out from his diplomatic duties to smash Jay Gould's control of the Erie Railroad, and effectively passed from the political scene with his failures in the Spanish post. As a major general of the army, he similarly faded away, but while fading he went through his inherited and accumulated fortunes. He also became a firm friend of his immediate antagonist at Gettysburg, Lieutenant General James Longstreet, whom he outlived ten years. These doughty warriors refought that battle many times, mutually supporting each other as to leadership, strategy, and tactics.

The student of Civil War history will admire Mr. Swanberg's dispassionate handling of one of the most explosive Americans. Dan Sickles combined many qualities — patriotism, an intense drive for wealth and power, love of any kind of fight (verbal, military, or rough-and-tumble), and a flair for holding the center of the stage. He was endowed with wit, intellect, and courage which made him a strong friend or formidable opponent. His personal ambition gov-

erned almost every move, but his energy, initiative, courage, and determination were qualities lacking in many of his contemporaries. Vainglorious and immoral, he could be criticized for bad judgment, but never for failure of nerve or want of action. The author has given us an admirable character study of a man for whom the postman rang not twice, but many times.

CHARLES G. KIRK

Iowa City, Iowa

Forgotten Hero: General James B. McPherson. By Elizabeth J. Whaley. (New York: Exposition Press. 1955. Pp. 203. \$3.50.)

GENERAL E. P. ALEXANDER, in his *Military Memoirs of a Confederate*, quoted Union General James B. McPherson as making this observation at the outbreak of the Civil War:

This war is not going to be the ninety day affair that papers and politicians are predicting. . . . For your cause there can be but one result. It must be lost. Your whole population is only about eight millions; three millions are slaves who may become an element of danger. You have no army, no navy, no treasury, and practically none of the manufactures and machine shops necessary for the support of armies, and for war on a large scale. You are but scattered agricultural communities, and you will be cut off from the rest of the world by blockade. Your cause must end in defeat.

This keen perception and accurate judgment are, for the most part, not readily apparent in Elizabeth Whaley's modest and, unhappily, incomplete study of one of General Grant's favorite Corps commanders. As a Union officer who did much to further his predictions to eventual realization, General McPherson merits a study equal to his ability and achievements. Nevertheless, the author of *Forgotten Hero* deserves much credit for a great amount of preliminary spadework. Her researches into McPherson's early life and her tracing of correspondence and newspaper materials should prove most helpful to future biographers.

James Birdseye McPherson was born on November 14, 1828, in a little Ohio settlement near present-day Clyde. His schooling was limited, and the frontier conditions were fairly rigorous, but young McPherson attracted the attention of influential persons and was chosen to attend the United States Military Academy. At West Point, in 1853, he was graduated at the head of his class, which included Philip H. Sheridan and John B. Hood; the commencement address was delivered by Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, and the cadets received their commissions from the Academy's Superintendent, Colonel Robert E. Lee.

Ensuing tours of duty included an instructorship at West Point and an engineering assignment in California. In July, 1861, McPherson was made a captain of engineers and soon thereafter took charge of the harbor forts at Boston. Later in the year General Halleck asked McPherson to join his staff

as aide-de-camp, with the rank of lieutenant colonel, and in early 1862 Colonel McPherson was transferred to General Grant's staff. From here on it was to be efficient teamwork with each new battle as an example of further improvement. Fort Henry, Fort Donelson, Shiloh, Corinth, Raymond, Jackson, Champion Hill, and Vicksburg all revealed McPherson's tactical skill and ability in leadership. With the fall of Vicksburg he was made commander of the city.

The most poignant portion of James McPherson's dedicated life is the account of his engagement to Emily Hoffman, a Baltimore belle whom he met shortly before the outbreak of war. With Confederate sympathies, however, her family strongly opposed the match, and the young couple decided to wait. By 1864 the family opposition dwindled, and in March of that year McPherson obtained a month's leave of absence and was on his way to Baltimore to be married. Fate intervened in the form of orders returning him at once to active duty for the spring drive on Atlanta. The rest is part of the grim saga that is so frequently part of the Civil War story. On July 22, 1864, General McPherson was killed. Not quite thirty-six years old, he had already displayed an ability one might reasonably expect from a much older man.

In a moving letter of condolence to Emily Hoffman, General Sherman referred to McPherson as "that bright particular star." In any number of accounts of the Civil War, the name of James McPherson stands out with an emphasis not so readily apparent where many other commanders are concerned. There must have been an uncommon quality to the man to thus give his name a glow which has so successfully survived the tarnish of time.

ARNOLD GATES

Garden City, New York

Thaddeus Stevens. By Ralph Korngold. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company. 1955. Pp. xiv, 460. \$6.00.)

THADDEUS STEVENS BELONGS TO THAT COTERIE of well-known Americans about whom it is difficult to write with complete objectivity. A center of controversy during his long tenure in public life, particularly as a symbol of opposition to both Lincoln and Johnson, he has remained a man of considerable interest and importance to historians and biographers. He was both condemned and praised for his policies during the Civil War and Reconstruction periods, and has received the same ambivalent treatment by succeeding generations. Mr. Korngold enters the lists definitely on Stevens' side and therefore renders a service to those who are interested in interpreting the basic issues of an extremely complicated era. A jury must hear both sides of a case before rendering a reasonable judgment, and the author of this latest biography presents the case for Stevens with clarity and precision.

The major portion of the book is devoted to the issues of the increasingly bitter controversy between Congress and the Executive leadership from 1860 to the impeachment trial of Andrew Johnson, and the merits of Stevens' position are examined with considerable sympathy. "Old Thad" emerges from this study as a man fiercely imbued with a crusading spirit and a forthright

conviction of the rightness of his point of view which helps to explain not only his leadership in the struggle but also his uncompromising attitude. His wit, sarcasm, mental agility, and skill in mustering arguments to support his chosen objectives are clearly represented as segments of his power, and — regardless of whether or not one agrees with his position — he is convincingly portrayed as one of the most powerful men in Congressional history. His knowledge of the uses of party machinery and his fanatical adherence to his principles made him one of the most formidable opponents that any president ever had. While Mr. Korngold allows many of Stevens' Congressional speeches to speak for themselves, he brings to the reader a realization of the fire and zeal that burned in the breasts of the abolitionists. They were sincere men driven by a powerful urge, and if one chanced to be endowed with the gifts of Thaddeus Stevens he made an opponent to be feared and respected. The reader is left with no doubt that Stevens was a man who had dedicated himself to a particular goal — the freedom and equality of the negro.

The most valuable contribution which Mr. Korngold makes to the historical interpretation of the period is his presentation of Stevens' arguments, and the contrast between them and Lincoln's position with respect to negro emancipation and the plans of both Lincoln and Johnson for reconstruction. It is a clear exposition of Stevens' stand, and there certainly is need for this to be understood as fully as possible. One feels that there is more to be said in support of both presidents than has been presented here, and this perhaps points up the major weakness of the biography as a whole. In his efforts to portray the major facets of Stevens' strength, Mr. Korngold is inclined to be overly anxious to shield him from criticism. Undoubtedly one can always sense the strength of the man, but his weaknesses and the merits of his opponents are not as fully examined.

This, of course, is not the definitive biography of Thaddeus Stevens — if, indeed, that will ever be written — but it is one which will be very helpful in future evaluations. Somewhere the middle ground will be found between the extremes. The book is well written, and the selected bibliography is highly useful. Mr. Korngold is inclined to depend on individual memoirs for some of his data, and because of personal bias the accuracy of much of this type of material is questionable. All in all, however, the book is well worth reading, and no student of the Civil War or Reconstruction eras can afford to overlook the provocative point of view expressed in this biography.

MYRON H. LUKE

Hempstead, New York

Beloved. By Vina Delmar. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company. 1956. Pp. 382. \$3.95.)

TO THOSE WHO REMEMBER VINA DELMAR as author of novels like *Bad Girl*, *Loose Ladies*, and *Kept Women*, her latest book is going to come as a considerable surprise, for it can be said almost categorically that *Beloved* is one of the better historical romances dealing with the Civil War. Briefly, it is

the story of Judah P. Benjamin, the great statesman of the Confederacy. It carries him through his early years in Charleston, his short stay at Yale, his rise as a young lawyer and politician in New Orleans and his marriage there to Natalie St. Martin, his service in Washington as a senator from Louisiana, his activities as Secretary of War and then Secretary of State in Jefferson Davis' cabinet, and his amazing post-war career as a London lawyer.

As might be expected, Mrs. Delmar is more interested in Benjamin as a man than as a statesman. Obviously she admires him tremendously, possibly too much since at times he is portrayed as almost too competent and long-suffering. Of his competence, however, there is abundant evidence in other sources. He was in fact a brilliant lawyer and statesman, a shrewd politician, and even a superior military strategist. Had Jefferson Davis been willing to accept more of Benjamin's advice, the Confederacy would in all likelihood have fared better. Many "mistakes" charged against Benjamin were policies he had originally opposed but had to support because he was over-ruled by Davis, the cabinet, or the generals.

As the title of the book suggests, the author's central interest is in the relation between Benjamin and his highly born Creole wife. ("Beloved" is the salutation used by Natalie Benjamin in her letters to Judah.) Mrs. Delmar shows great skill and reticence in dealing with Benjamin's married life, for such materials could very easily have been cheapened and sensationalized. Except for brief periods when she lived with Benjamin in New Orleans and Washington — and had her romances on the side — Natalie lived in Paris. Occasionally Benjamin visited her there, but most of the time they lived apart. Nevertheless they remained in love to the very end, when Benjamin died with his wife, daughter, and son-in-law at his bedside. Mrs. Delmar's explanation of Natalie is simply that she was not a person who could be satisfied with or by one man, and her explanations of Benjamin's equanimity in the face of his wife's antics are various. Least plausible is the suggestion that his love was so heroic that it could stand any amount of shock. More convincing is the suggestion that he often found his professional activities more interesting than his pretty Creole wife. And most moving, and possibly most profoundly true, is the implication that for Benjamin his wife's faithlessness was simply another of those dire circumstances — beginning with his dismissal from Yale and continuing throughout his life — which as a Jew he had to expect and accept with dignity.

What appeals most in *Beloved* to a student of the Civil War are the characterizations of the Confederate leaders. The course of the war itself is not traced in detail, but considerable space is given to men like Slidell and Jefferson Davis. All of the Confederate cabinet appear, and many of the generals. One catches the robustness and amorality of Slidell, the impractical zeal of Davis, the confusion and animosities within the cabinet, and the hostility between the civilian and military leaders. Especially interesting is Mrs. Delmar's portrayal of the distrust in which Robert E. Lee was held by the non-Virginians. Benjamin himself is made to say to Lee when the latter proposed to invade Pennsylvania instead of going to the rescue of Vicksburg: "You

have never championed a plan that was not likely to serve Virginia. . . . You are a Virginian, not a Confederate."

Beloved, in short, is a book that creates people out of names. That they were indeed as Mrs. Delmar creates them is of course open to question, but her surmises are as good as any and better than most. In the final analysis, the novel is what it was intended to be, the story of Judah Benjamin. One comes away from it primarily with the impression of Benjamin as a singularly gifted person who won the respect of his contemporaries but who would have appreciated a larger measure of their affection.

JOHN C. GERBER

Iowa City, Iowa

Americans Interpret Their Civil War. By Thomas J. Pressly. (Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1954. Pp. xvi, 347. \$5.00.)

THIS IS THE FIRST BOOK on the historiography of the Civil War, although ten years ago Howard K. Beale, in his excellent condensation of "What Historians Have Said about the Causes of the Civil War," clearly pointed out the importance of the changing interpretations and existing controversies. Mr. Pressly's book deals with the varying points of view from 1861 to the fairly recent reviews of Allan Nevins' *Ordeal of the Union*.

The author begins with a summary of certain Northerners who wrote in the war years — Horace Greeley, for example, who defined the struggle as "the War of the Rebellion" and its chief cause as the institution of slavery. The Confederate definition of a "War between the States" is best represented by Edward A. Pollard. There follows a digest of another group who declared that the conflict was a "Needless War" brought about by Northern and Southern extremists, whose incessant agitation for almost fifteen years finally resulted in the appeal to arms. Perhaps the best known of this group were H. S. Foote of Tennessee and Samuel S. Cox of Ohio, representing a significant number of Americans who disliked intensely the choice thrust upon them by the crisis of Fort Sumter. Issues and attitudes were thus early defined; the author makes clear that between 1861 and 1870 almost every interpretation given thereafter had already been stated.

The next two chapters bring the reader into the twentieth century. The author describes the development of a "nationalist" tradition, involving such historians as James Ford Rhodes, Frederick J. Turner, Woodrow Wilson, Edward Channing, and J. B. McMaster. Their position was that the war had been brought about by the moral issue of slavery, and they clearly stated their satisfaction with the results — the preservation of the Union and the destruction of slavery. Charles A. Beard and his followers, however, were not in complete accord with this explanation, and their search for causes added to the complexity of the problem. In addition to the theses that "both sides were right" and that "both sides were wrong," that the war was an "irrepressible conflict" and a "repressible" one, historians became increasingly involved in economic causation.

A later chapter, "The New Vindication of the South," deals with the works of U. B. Phillips, Charles W. Ramsdell, and Frank L. Owsley. In his preface (p. xii) the author states that "wherever possible, I have tried to indicate what seems to me pertinent information about the backgrounds of the individuals discussed in this book," with the further implication that such information need not be considered as evidence of a biased interpretation. On p. 240, however, the author is deeply concerned over the possibility that "Southern-born historians, trained in the South, writing the history of the South at Southern universities, and using predominantly Southern sources, might become as 'biased' in their own way as were the 'outsiders' of whom they complained."

There follows an examination of the "revisionist" view of a "repressible" conflict, centered around James G. Randall and Avery Craven, as opposed to such historians as D. L. Dumond and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., who disagree with the "revisionists" with emphasis on the moral issue. The final summary is of what the author calls "the new nationalist tradition" developed by Allan Nevins, Bernard DeVoto, and others — an interpretation with which the author agrees.

Competent historians are fully aware of subjective factors that influence interpretations of our history, and the author acquaints the reader with them. For those unfamiliar with the various explanations of the Civil War this book will be most useful. Specialists who have worked with primary and secondary sources for this period may not be fully satisfied with the work. The title certainly implies that it is a summary of the many interpretations of the Civil War and nothing more, but the criticism of certain historians entails the obligation to weigh carefully the historical evidence these historians have used and the validity of the questions they have asked and sought to answer. Randall and Craven, for example, are brushed aside with no effort made to explain what to them were important issues leading to controversy and war. There are, also, too many implications that Southern historians are more likely to be biased than those elsewhere, although this reviewer does not believe that such an effect was intended. All in all, however, this book brings a part of the controversy up to date, and the end of it is not in sight.

RALPH B. FLANDERS

New York, New York

Custer's Luck. By Edgar I. Stewart. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. 1955. Pp. xvi, 522. \$5.95.)

CUSTER HAD REMARKABLE LUCK MOST OF HIS LIFE. This book is about his bad luck, the kind he was not used to. It is not — as the title might seem to indicate — a biography of the dashing Boy General. The work opens with a review of the vacillating, inept, and often dishonest policy of the United States government toward the Great Plains tribes, covering a period from about 1840 to 1876 in some detail. The rest of the book, and by far the larger part of it, is an account — in great detail and with extensive background information — of

what happened in the Northwest from the beginning of 1876 to the middle of that year.

The objective of United States policy toward the Indians during the 1840-1876 period was, of course, to strip the tribes of their rights and to free the white man from any fear of attack. To do this, it was apparently necessary to herd the Indians onto government agencies and then to defraud them. The Indians, quite naturally, resented this treatment and offered sporadic resistance. In 1876 the government decided to force a showdown with the bands of hostiles living away from the agencies by sending against them three columns of the army. It was agreed that the major problem of the campaign would be to prevent the Indians from running away and thus avoiding battle.

On the morning of May 17th, to the strains of "The Girl I Left Behind," the last of the three army columns to take the field, the Dakota column, left Fort Abraham Lincoln and marched west to catch and chastise the Sioux. Originally, Custer was to have commanded this column. A month before, however, his testimony in the Belknap hearings had angered President Grant, and it was only after humbling himself to the President that he was even permitted to accompany the expedition in a subordinate capacity.

On June 25th, at the head of Seventh Cavalry troops F, C, E, I, and L detached from the main body of the column, Custer discovered that the Indians would not run. What actually took place on the Little Big Horn that day, and what exactly happened to Custer and his five troops there, has always been anyone's guess. The author of *Custer's Luck* records almost everyone's, including his own. He does it skillfully, interpreting and explaining the various combinations of actions, personalities, and circumstances and relating them meaningfully to one another. The story as he tells it has pace, a sense of drama, and, surprisingly, considerable suspense. When George Armstrong Custer rides to the edge of the bluffs overlooking the hostiles' camp and turns in his saddle to call, "Hurrah, boys, we've got them," you half-suspect that somehow he has. And in spite of the fact that he is looking down on what is possibly the greatest number of Indians ever assembled in one place on the North American continent, you are still hoping that he will at least escape alive.

It has been suggested by another writer on Custer that his story contains the elements of Greek tragedy. Far-fetched as this may at first seem, a disaster was implicit in the thirty-five years of government bungling and double-dealing that preceded the decision to go to war against the Sioux. Given this much, and given Custer and his daring and ambition, and given the temper of the Indians which prompted Sitting Bull's invitation to the warriors still on the agencies to come out for one last fight, the massacre on the Little Big Horn is inevitable. Custer's falling into disfavor with Grant — and thus, possibly, his desire to regain lost prestige — the division of his force, Reno's reluctance, Benteen's animosity, and even the topography of the country around the hostiles' village, all seem a part of the classic pattern: no matter what he does, Custer is doomed. The massacre is the logical conclusion to his career; it is also its most glorious episode. This, at any rate, was the feeling *Custer's Luck* conveyed to this reader. It seems easily the outstanding achievement in an admirable work.

If faults are to be noted, one would be the author's lack of confidence in his reader's memory. The repetition of minor details is irritating. More serious, there is little discussion of the actions in which Custer's luck was good. The Battle of Washita is described at some length, but there is no mention of such encounters, for instance, as Woodstock, Cedar Creek, or even Waynesboro. Excellent as the book is, it might very well have benefited from a fuller treatment of its hero's earlier life.

In addition to a bibliography and index, there are photographs of some of the participants and locales described, a map of the Yellowstone-Missouri River areas in 1876, and a map of the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

CURTIS L. JOHNSON

Chicago, Illinois

The Assassination of President Lincoln and the Trial of the Conspirators.

Compiled and arranged by Benn Pitman, with an introduction by Philip Van Doren Stern. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls. 1954. Pp. 420. \$7.50.)

IN 1865, SOON AFTER THE CONCLUSION OF THE TRIAL of the Lincoln conspirators, four versions of the trial record found their way into print. Of the four, the one compiled by Benn Pitman, the official trial recorder, has remained as the best version for the student of the Civil War. Old and battered copies are to be found in the libraries of historians and writers. Now, however, a photographic reproduction of this work has been published for those collectors who have not been able to find a copy of the original edition. To this new edition has been added an excellent introduction by Philip Van Doren Stern, who sets the scene for the trial and clarifies some obscure points not covered in the testimony itself.

Pitman, brother of the inventor of the shorthand system which bears his name, performed a valuable service for future historians in his arrangement of the trial testimony. The book is carefully indexed both by events and by names, and sketches and appendices fill out the picture of the trial of the eight conspirators.

In its determination to obtain a conviction, the Federal Government first moved the trial from civil to military jurisdiction. Before the military commission which tried the conspirators, some 400 persons gave testimony, much of which had no direct relation to the crime. In addition to the actual assassination, witnesses testified concerning the attempted burning of New York City, the prison at Andersonville, the burning of steamboats on western rivers, and a long list of other subjects.

If any complaint can be made of this new edition, it is that in reproducing it photographically the publisher has been forced to repeat the miserably small type face so popular in publishing circles during the last half of the nineteenth century. Aside from this unavoidable defect, Pitman's trial record stands as an excellent reference work which any student of the Civil War will welcome as an invaluable addition to his library.

IRVING HERSCHBEIN

New York, New York

Books Received

- Angle, Paul M., and Miers, Earl Schenck. *The Living Lincoln: The Man, His Mind, His Times, and the War He Fought, Reconstructed from His Own Writings*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. 1955. Pp. viii, 673. \$6.95.)
- Brick, John. *Jubilee*. (Garden City: Doubleday and Company. 1956. Pp. 320. \$3.95.)
- Bruce, Robert V. *Lincoln and the Tools of War*. (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company. 1956. Pp. xv, 368. \$5.00.) Reviewed in this issue.
- Coulter, E. Merton. *Lost Generation: The Life and Death of James Barrow, C.S.A.* (Tuscaloosa: Confederate Publishing Company. 1956. Pp. 118. \$4.00.)
- Donald, David. *Lincoln Reconsidered*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1956. Pp. xiii, 200, xiv. \$3.00.)
- Maxwell, William Quentin. *Lincoln's Fifth Wheel: The Political History of the United States Sanitary Commission*. (New York: Longmans, Green and Company. 1956. Pp. xii, 372. \$5.00.)
- Monaghan, Jay. *Civil War on the Western Border, 1854-1865*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company. 1955. Pp. 454. \$6.00.) Reviewed in this issue.
- Monaghan, Jay. *The Man Who Elected Lincoln*. (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company. 1956. Pp. xii, 334. \$4.50.)
- Nye, Russel B. *William Lloyd Garrison and the Humanitarian Reformers*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company. 1955. Pp. vi, 215. \$3.00.)
- O'Connor, Richard, *Guns of Chickamauga*. (Garden City: Doubleday and Company. 1955. Pp. 288. \$3.95.)
- Pratt, Fletcher. *Civil War on Western Waters*. (New York: Henry Holt and Company. 1956. Pp. 255. \$3.50.) Reviewed in this issue.
- Randall, Ruth Painter. *Lincoln's Sons*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company. 1956. Pp. xvi, 373. \$5.00.)
- Shackford, James Atkins. *David Crockett: The Man and the Legend*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. 1956. Pp. xiv, 338. \$6.00.)
- Swanberg, W. A. *Sickles the Incredible*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1956. Pp. xii, 433. \$6.00.) Reviewed in this issue.
- Whaley, Elizabeth J. *Forgotten Hero: General James B. McPherson*. (New York: Exposition Press. 1955. Pp. 203. \$3.50.) Reviewed in this issue.

An Invitation To New Subscribers

WITH THIS ISSUE, *CIVIL WAR HISTORY* publishes speeches by two recognized authorities on the Civil War: Pulitzer Prize-winning Bruce Catton and Ulysses S. Grant III, grandson of the Northern general. In its publication of speeches and interesting original documents of the war years as well as chapters from forthcoming books and manuscripts written by contemporary authors, *Civil War History* endeavors to bring its readers a wide selection of material on this period. The next issue, edited by Dr. Walter Blair of the University of Chicago, will deal with Civil War Humor.

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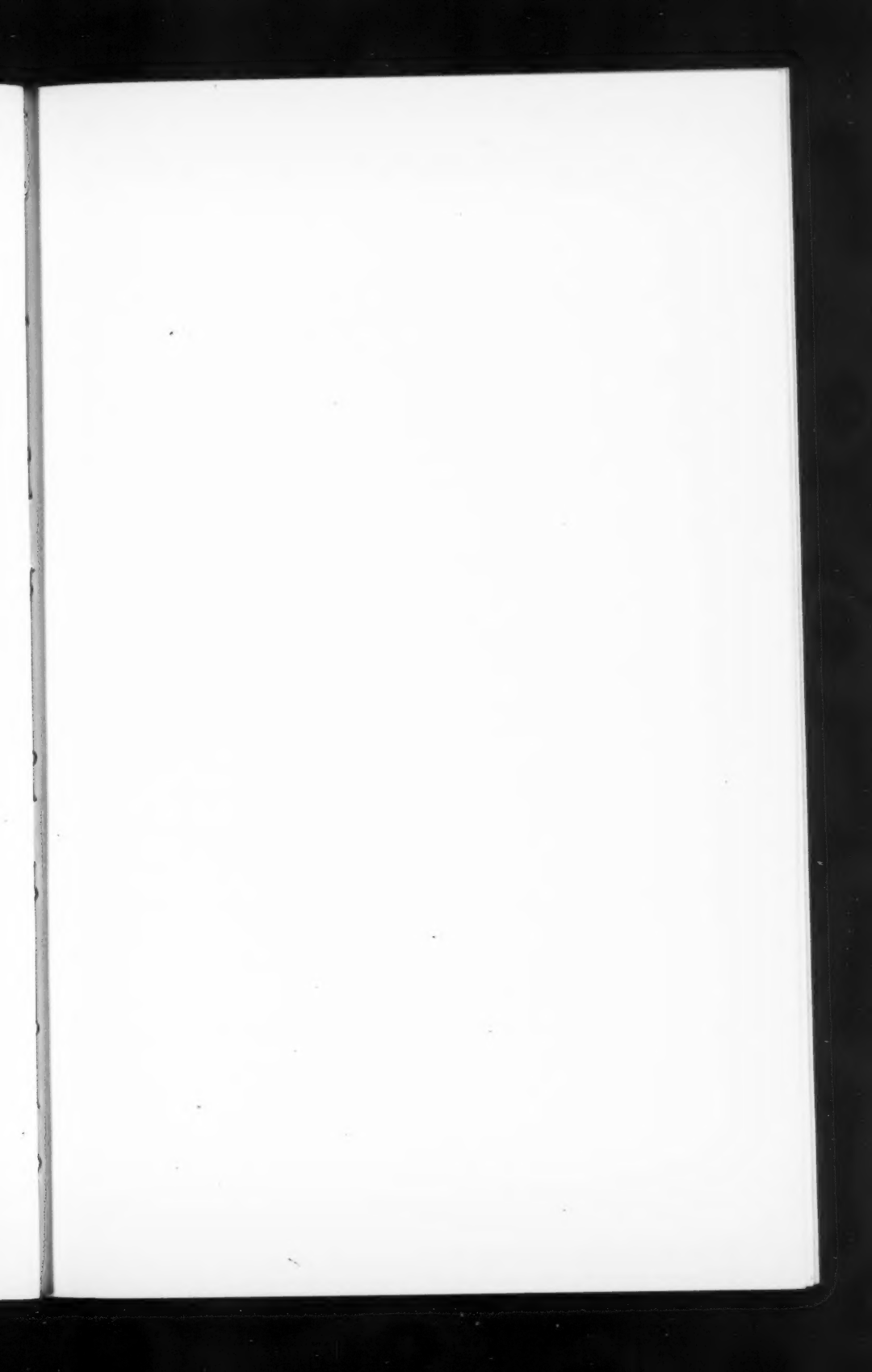
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The Editors of CIVIL WAR HISTORY regret that the demand for copies of the first three issues of the magazine has been so heavy that our stock of them is exhausted, and that we do not know of any other source from which these issues might be obtained. The printing order has been increased, and we believe it will be possible to purchase single copies of the issues from now on.

Publication difficulties on the first issue of CIVIL WAR HISTORY have resulted in a delay of publication of subsequent issues. We are making efforts to correct this delay, and anticipate that within this year of publication the date on the magazine and the actual date of publication will be made to coincide. Meanwhile, we thank our subscribers for their patience in waiting for the magazine.

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